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The RING®

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JULY 2010
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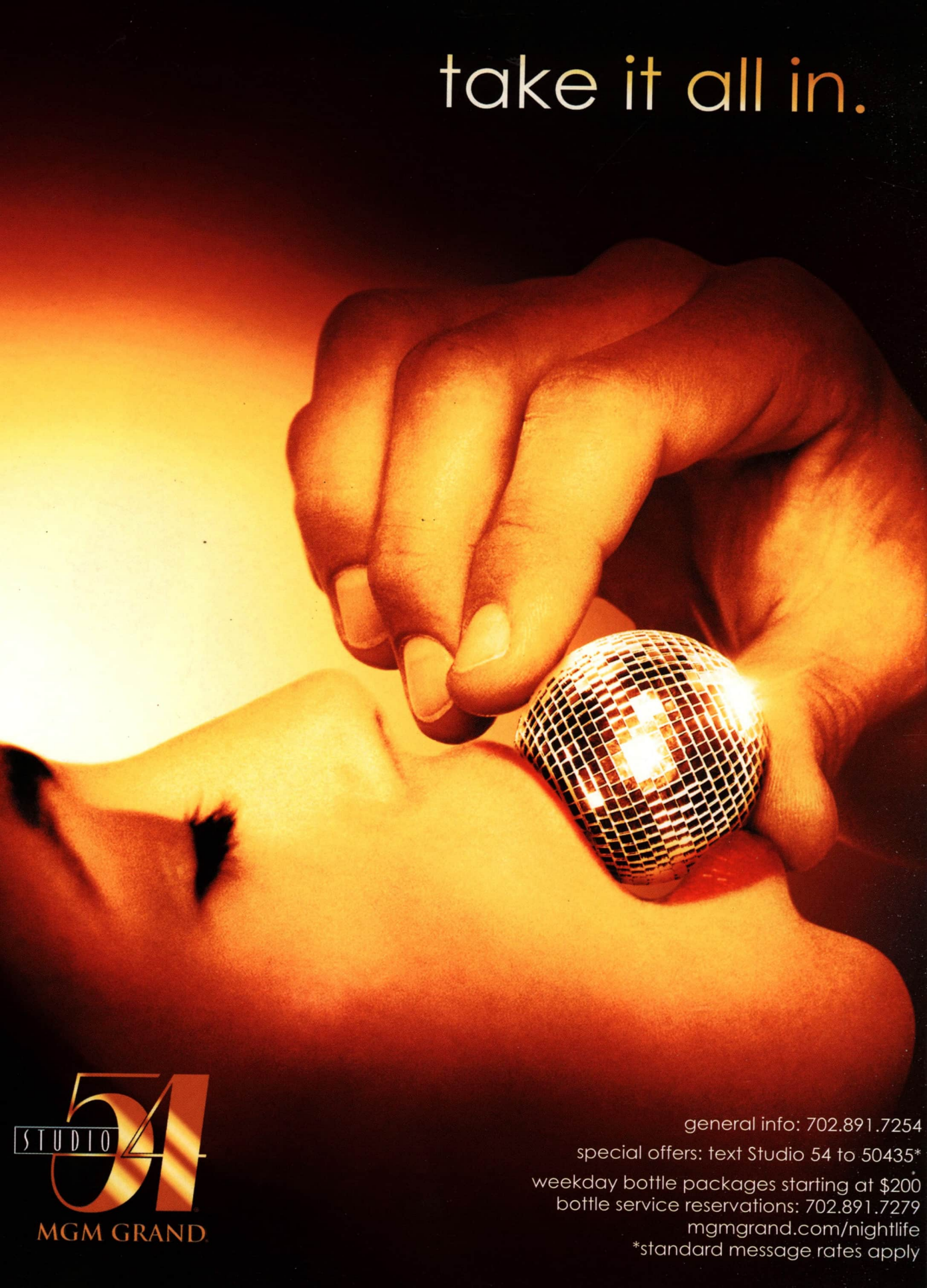
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Volume 89, No. 8 July 2010

The RING

The Vicious Cycle

Although I was horrified by the news that Edwin Valero had murdered his wife and committed suicide, I was not surprised. How could you be when reports of Valero physically abusing his wife and generally running amok have been surfacing for quite some time?

Actually, the first thing I thought about—after stifling the sickening feeling rising in my gut—was Don Stradley's article about former middleweight champion Billy Papke in the April 2010 issue of THE RING. Like Valero, Papke murdered his wife and then turned the gun on himself.

Hang around boxing long enough and you can't help but come to some conclusions. One of my pet but highly unscientific theories is that the majority of fighters are emotionally wounded people *before* they lace on their first pair of boxing gloves.

The most common cause of their distress is poverty, and if you don't think growing up in deprived socioeconomic conditions can warp a child's mind, you've never gone to bed hungry or woken up in the morning covered with fleabites.

Even boxers raised in relatively affluent surroundings are frequently deeply troubled individuals. An abusive, domineering father is a common theme in boxing and can easily lead to psychological problems. Just ask Gerry Cooney or Bobby Czyz.

Sometimes it can be genetic. Joe Louis' father spent the last two years of his life in an insane asylum, and although Joe's own demons were pretty much held in check during his fighting career, he too was involuntarily committed to a psychiatric hospital in his waning years.

Even guilt can evolve into a mental disorder. Jake LaMotta was so guilt-ridden (because he thought he had killed a man when he was a teenager) that he didn't care whether he lived or died. It was a mindset that made him a very dangerous man both in and outside a boxing ring.

These are not isolated cases. They are repeated time and again throughout boxing history, a fact that was driven home to me when researching *Boxing Babylon: Behind The Shadowy World Of The Prize Ring*, a book I wrote that was published in 1990. The deeper I delved, the more it became clear that boxers are far from the most mentally stable demographic.

Many boxers use their inner demons to fuel their fighting fury, and if that's as far as it goes, good for them. It's not easy to find an outlet for such complicated conditions, and any method of channeling negative energy in a positive direction is a good one. But when that ferocity spills over into the rest of a boxer's life, trouble and/or tragedy are sure to follow.

When Tony Ayala Jr. was paroled after serving a lengthy prison term for sexual assault, a mental health professional warned that Ayala would most likely be fine as long as he was winning in the ring. But if things went badly between the ropes, he would probably revert to his old ways. Sure enough, shortly after losses to Yori Boy Campas and Anthony Bonsante, Ayala was in jail on sexual assault charges.

The back-story was all too familiar and probably the saddest part: Ayala had been a victim of the same atrocity when he was a kid. As is so often the case in such heartbreaking circumstances, the victim became a perpetrator.

Boxing has saved countless disturbed men from themselves, but for others, such as Valero and Ayala, it can only provide a temporary refuge. Some demons are so evil that not even the rigors of the ring can exorcise them.

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[Opening Shot]

Geriatric Chin Checker

Okay, so maybe Evander Holyfield can't turn back the clock in his never-ending quest to regain the heavyweight championship, but at least he can kayo somebody who looks a lot like Father Time. While critics were not impressed with the 47-year-old "Real Deal's" eighth-round TKO of 41-year-old Francois Botha, Commander Vander did take a baby step toward his quixotic goal by winning the uber-prestigious World Boxing Federation heavyweight title. That's one belt down and only 177 to go.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

THE BIBLE OF BOXING

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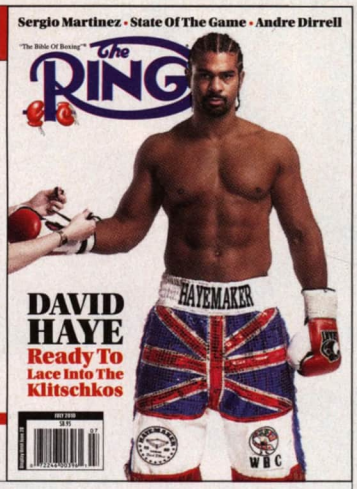

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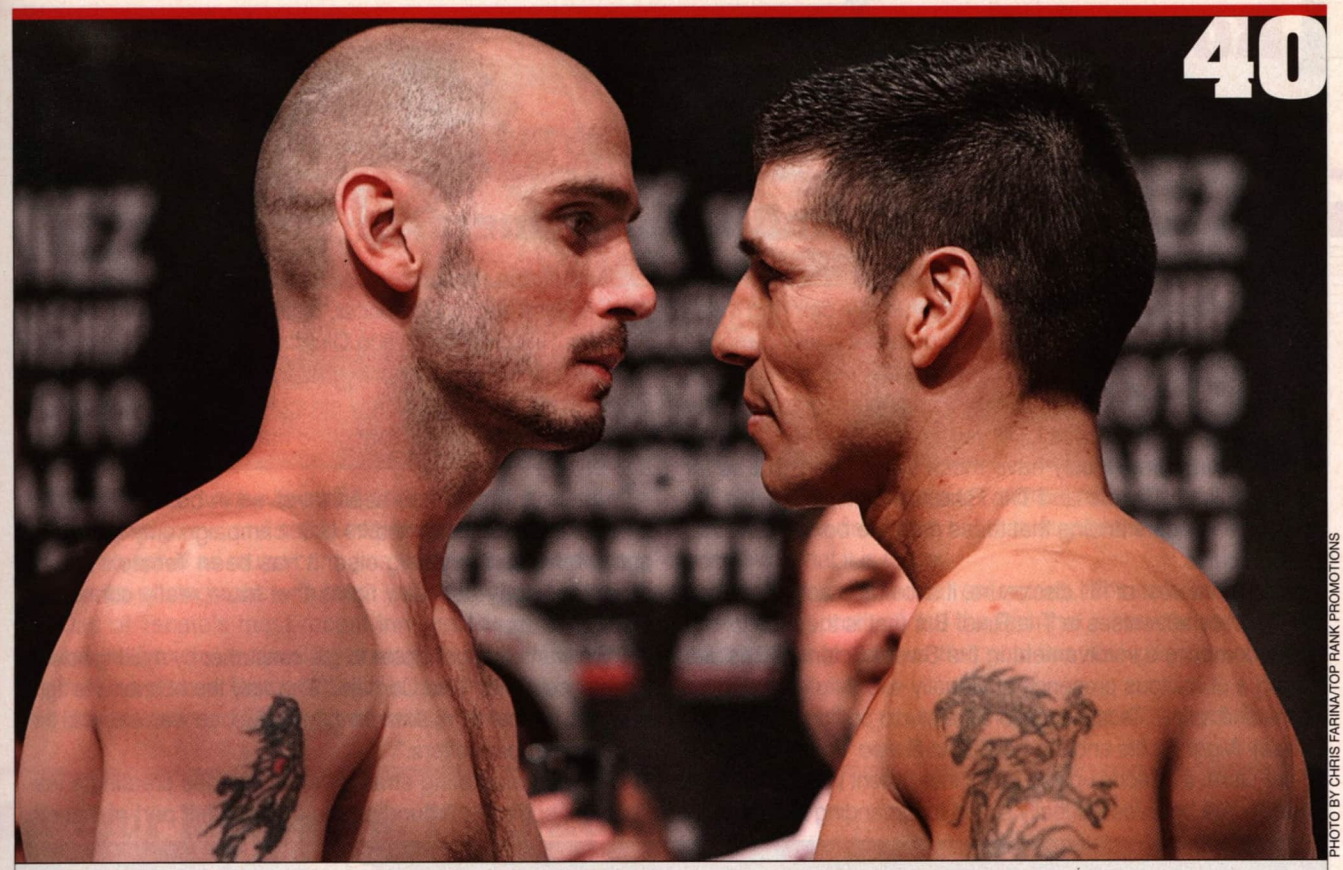

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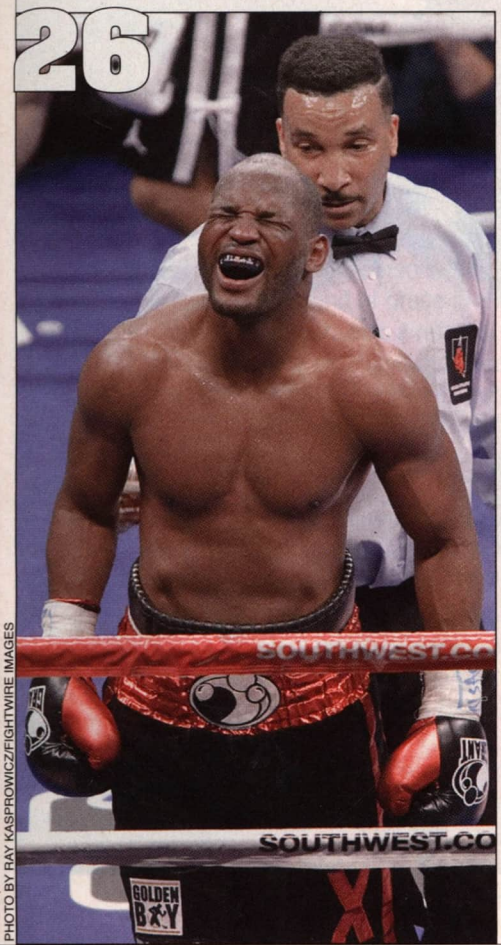

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PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

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Beer And Boxing: A Profitable Partnership

We've all seen the commercials: Working-class Mexican men doing manly things—carrying sides of beef, hauling lumber, riding horses, wiring money back home to mom. The fun part comes at the end when all the men get together in a boisterous neighborhood cantina for a couple of Tacates and a lot of yelling.

These men obviously have much in common, but as far as the folks at Tecate and THE RING are concerned, it is the unspoken understanding that these men are boxing fans that really counts.

In the interest of full disclosure, it should be acknowledged that Tecate advertises in THE RING. But that is the least of the beer company's involvement in the Sweet Science. Besides being a ubiquitous presence at virtually every fight card (both large and small), Tecate sponsors the studio portion of ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* and the new *Solo Boxeo Tecate* series on TeleFutura. It all adds up to a major investment in the sport, one that Tecate believes is ideally suited to expanding its brand.

"Among the Hispanic consumers, boxing ranks very, very high, a close second to soccer," said Jorge Cornejo, Tecate's Western Regional Marketing Director. "Boxing also embodies what our brand is all about—boldness and character. In a way, boxing mirrors the daily struggles of Hispanics living in the U.S. We think it's a very good match between our brand and boxing."

Although Tecate has been involved in boxing in Mexico for a long time, it launched its U.S. campaign only four years ago. More than anything else, it has been Tecate's mail-in rebates for pay-per-view fights that have really connected with fight fans.

"We wanted to get closer to the consumer by making boxing more accessible," said Cornejo. "The way the economy is right now, the consumer is searching for value, so we've upped the number of rebate offers."

Tecate's marketing strategy also includes creating a festive atmosphere surrounding the fights. A big part of that are

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

While not everybody drinks beer, few can resist ogling the Tecate girls

Tecate's portable boxing museum

the Tecate girls, whose beautiful presence grace press conferences, weigh-ins, and social events connected to the fights. They also serve as round-card girls and are in great demand to pose for photographs with fans.

One of Tecate's most-recent innovations is the Tecate Museo de Boxero, a traveling boxing museum. It houses a state-of-the-art bus, festooned with larger-than-life portraits of famous boxers, and filled with all sorts of memorabilia. The idea is to give fans access to historical moments that they may not have seen first-hand, but that shaped the character of the sport into what it is today.

Like any commercial enterprise, Tecate's main focus is selling its product, but the fact that it has chosen boxing as a vehicle to achieve that goal has also given the sport a significant boost.

—Nigel Collins

Arthur Mercante, 1920-2010

Arthur Mercante's death on April 10 inspired an outpouring of affection and respect from the boxing world. That the passing of a referee would receive more mainstream coverage than the passing of most champions may have surprised some, but for many boxing fans, Arthur Mercante was not just any referee. He was *the* referee.

Everything about him, from the quiet, dignified way he approached his work, to the crispness of his shirt and bowtie, read as stately. His background as a navy man and amateur boxer added to his no-nonsense persona. Yet his businesslike demeanor was offset by a kind of grace in the ring that was described by his son Arthur Jr., also a referee, as "balletic."

Mercante was known as the most inconspicuous of referees. He wrote in his 2006 memoirs, *Inside The Ropes*, "You need to be firm but never intrusive, alert but not over reactive, mobile but never out of position to intervene at a moment's notice."

Mercante began refereeing professionally in 1954. By the time he retired in 2001, he'd refereed 145 title bouts, including the first Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier bout in 1971. Mercante was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1995.

"He was a man so intent on what he was doing in the ring, that all that mattered to him was for the fighters to put on a good show and to fight cleanly," wrote Bill Gallo of the New York *Daily News*.

Fortunately, Mercante can still be seen on DVDs, or the occasional ESPN Classic clip, where he'll forever be firm, alert, and mobile, gliding between fighters, enforcing the rules, lending some class to the sport.

—Don Stradley

PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Boxing mourns the death of Mercante

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
03/25/10	Abner Mares KO 5 Felipe Almanza *All you need to know: Mares next fight had already been scheduled*	FOX Sports	b	C	D	C
03/27/10	David Rodriguez KO 2 Daniel Bispo *Shouldn't an undefeated heavy with 31 kayos be on TV more often?*	PPV	h	C+	C	C+
03/27/10	Chris Henry KO 1 Hugo Garay *The most unspectacular kayo of the year*	PPV	lh	B+	B+	C
03/27/10	Erik Morales W 12 Jose Alfaro *Future Hall of Famer's comeback adds nothing to legacy*	PPV	w	B-	B-	C
03/27/10	Ulises Solis KO 6 Bert Batawang *Thirty-eight-year-old Filipino retires between rounds*	FOX Sports	jfl	B	B-	C+
03/27/10	Giovanni Segura KO 4 Ronald Ramos *Is Segura the most exciting junior flyweight since Michael Carbajal?*	FOX Sports	f	A-	C+	B-
03/27/10	Joan Guzman W 12 Ali Funeka *Funeka gets screwed every time he fights in North America*	HBO	w	A-	A-	C
03/27/10	Marcos Maidana KO 6 Victor Cayo *Maidana shows why some believe Amir Khan is avoiding him*	HBO	jw	B+	B	B
03/27/10	Andre Dirrell DQ 11 Arthur Abraham *Has Dirrell realized he won yet?*	Showtime	sm	A	A-	B-
04/02/10	Erislandy Lara W 10 Danny Perez *Lara as boring as he is talented*	Showtime	m	C+	C	C
04/02/10	Delvin Rodriguez W 12 Mike Arnaoutis *Only Rodriguez fought to win*	ESPN2	w	C+	B	C-
04/03/10	Mike Alvarado KO 2 Lenin Arroyo *Lenin is more susceptible to hooks then fish*	FOX Sports	w	C+	C	C+
04/03/10	Miguel Garcia KO 1 Tomas Villa *Hasn't Garcia earned a scarier nickname than "Mikey"?*	FOX Sports	f	C+	C	B-
04/03/10	Ismayl Sillakh KO 2 Daniel Judah *His name is Ismayl and he's a whale of a talent*	PPV	lh	C+	C+	B
04/03/10	Sergio Mora KO 7 Calvin Greene *The more Mora shook off the ring rust, the more he shook Greene*	PPV	m	B-	C-	B
04/03/10	Jason Litzau Tech W 7 Rocky Juarez *Did anybody else think that Litzau's eye didn't look that bad?*	PPV	jl	B	B	C+
04/03/10	Bernard Hopkins W 12 Roy Jones *The mouths are the only things still working on this pair*	PPV	lh	B-	C	D
04/10/10	Mark Melligen W 10 Norberto Gonzalez *Melligen, one of the few effective Filipino boxers above 140*	FOX Sports	w	B-	B-	C+
04/10/10	David Estrada KO 8 Orlando Lora *Estrada confirms status as boxing's best gatekeeper*	ESPN2	w	B-	B	B
04/10/10	Evander Holyfield KO 8 Francois Botha *Combined age of boxers should never exceed the PPV fee*	PPV	h	C	C	B-
04/10/10	Celestino Caballero W 12 Daud Yordan *Nowhere near as bad as Lamps and Larry would have you believe*	HBO	f	A-	B	C+
04/10/10	Andre Berto KO 8 Carlos Quintana *Berto overcomes mental hurdles and torn biceps*	HBO	w	A-	B	B-
04/16/10	Fernando Guerrero KO 2 Michael Walker *Punch count of flurry that ended fight was 93 to 1*	Showtime	m	C+	C	B-
04/16/10	Henry Lundy W 10 Tyrese Hendrix *Ref Randy Phillips blows rare double knockdown in round one*	ESPN2	l	C	C+	C+
04/16/10	Tony Thompson KO 4 Owen Beck *Meaningless stay-busy fight for Thompson*	ESPN2	h	B-	C-	C
04/17/10	Lucian Bute KO 3 Edison Miranda *Miranda starched seconds after taunting Bute for lack of power*	HBO	sm	B+	C+	B+
04/17/10	**Sergio Martinez W 12 Kelly Pavlik** ***Two stars traveling in different directions***	**HBO**	**m**	**A**	**A-**	**B+**

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Lorraine Chargin, 1930-2010

Lorraine Chargin and Don Chargin were my best friends in boxing for most of the 38 years I knew them. When Lorraine passed away April 6 at the age of 79, I felt like I had lost a member of my family. Perhaps I had.

Those of us fortunate enough to be considered her friend will miss her. She and Don gave boxing its best one-two punch. Up and down the West Coast, from Sacramento to San Francisco, from Fresno to San Jose, from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara and every port in-between, they kept boxing alive for more than half a century, though Don, previously married, had begun his career out there in 1950.

They met in 1957 when Don was doing a closed-circuit telecast of an NFL game between the San Francisco 49ers and Detroit Lions, and they never split. They were inseparable in business and in life.

Don made the matches, and Lorraine did the rest. She took care of the contracts, rented the arenas, designed the posters, printed the tickets, sold the tickets, and kept the freeloaders away. Her 1995 confrontation with Don King during the Lennox Lewis vs. Lionel Butler fight at the ARCO Arena in Sacramento is legendary. King thought he could stroll in through the back door and take a press seat. Lorraine dressed him down at the door, then followed him to the press section and kept it going in front of 7,000 people. "If you don't start acting like a gentleman," she told him, "I'll throw you out of here." It's a true story! I was there!

Lorraine pulled no punches. When Ed Brophy would call her in the 1990s to buy an advertisement in the annual Hall of Fame Induction Program, she told him she wouldn't spend a dime until Don was inducted. After Don got his plaque in 2001, she became one of the Hall's biggest supporters.

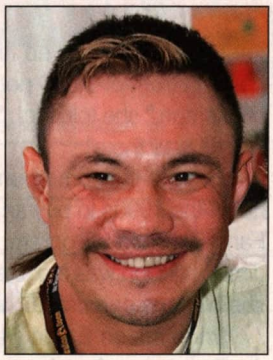
When Aileen Eaton was promoting fights at the Olympic Auditorium Los Angeles during the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, Don was making the matches. During that time, Lorraine became the office manager and turned the place upside down after she caught concessionaires and ticket takers pocketing cash. Lorraine was like the old mafia—one mistake and you're out. She could be tough as nails and sweet as sugar.

Aileen Eaton, in her time, was boxing's First Lady. She is the only woman to have been inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame. Lorraine Chargin is the only other woman I can think of who deserves the title of boxing's First Lady. Perhaps it's time for her to join Aileen Eaton in Canastota, New York.

—J Russell Peltz

Lorraine and Don Chargin: Inseparable in business and in life

Outside the Ropes



Tszyu: Elected to Aussie Hall of Fame

Former undisputed junior welterweight champion **Kostya Tszyu** will be inducted into the Australian Boxing Hall of Fame on October 9. Ironically, the same week that Tsyzu's election was announced, he said he was considering a comeback. Tszyu, 31-2 (25), turned pro in 1992 and had his last bout (so far) in 2005. Tszyu's son, **Timophey Tszyu**, currently holds the Australian Golden Gloves 140-pound title. Other inductees are **Wally Carr**, 58-38-9 (27), who held Australian titles at junior middleweight, middleweight, and light heavyweight, Australian bantamweight champ **Billy Males**, 11-3 (11), and world-class flyweight contender **Rocky Gattellari**, 21-3-1 (12), who also represented Australia at the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome ... Senior Master Sergeant **Manny Pacquiao**, a Philippine Army reservist, paid a morale-boosting visit to wounded soldiers at the AFP Medical Center in late-March ... **Shiro Kameda**, the father of former WBC flyweight titleholder **Koki Kameda**, has had his cornerman's license indefinitely suspended by the Japan Boxing Commission. The action was taken following the elder Kameda's verbal tirade against a fight official after his son lost to **Pongsaklek Wonjongkam** on March 27... **Amanda Rodrigues**, the widow of boxer **Arturo Gatti**, was awarded $100,000 from his estate by a Quebec Superior Court judge as financial compensation for legal fees she was forced to pay following the boxer's death in July 2009. She will also receive $2,000 a month to support the couple's 18-month-old son ... According to the Associated Press, Court of Claims Judge **Melvin Schweitzer** ruled that the New York State Athletic Commission failed to properly weigh **Arturo Gatti** before he fought **Joey Gamache** in 2000, but awarded no damages to Gamache who says he suffered brain damage during the fight, which he lost via second-round knockout, ruling that the issue of the weigh-in was not what caused the injuries to Gamache ... Promoter **Frank Warren** has won undisclosed damages and costs as well as a formal apology from **Ricky Hatton**, stemming from comments Hatton made during an interview with journalist **Matt Bendoris** in November 2009 ... Boxing brothers **Travis** and **Tarvis Simms** were arrested in early-April in Norwalk, Connecticut, after allegedly getting into a fight with each other. Travis' 10-year-old daughter was bitten on the arm when she tried to intervene. Travis, a city councilman, has been charged with reckless endangerment, threatening, and third-degree assault. Tarvis was charged with risk of injury to a minor, threatening, and third-degree assault ... Former professional boxer and self-styled "celebrity boxing promoter" **Damon Feldman**, 40, has been charged with staging numerous events without a valid promoter's license from the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission. Attorney General **Tom Corbett** said that Feldman also pre-arranged the outcome of various bouts. "The only thing that appears to be real about any of these events is the money that went into Mr. Feldman's pocket and the media attention he received," said Corbett. Feldman is charged with six counts of staging prohibited competitions and six counts of rigging publicly exhibited contests ... According to ESPN.com, **Ocie Harris**, who Las Vegas police identify as a "friend or associate" of **Floyd Mayweather**, has been arraigned on a six-count felony indictment charging him with attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon, carrying a concealed firearm, and discharging a weapon into a vehicle at the Crystal Palace Skating Center parking lot in August 2009 ... **Darryl Austin** and **Rasalaam Jackson** have been arrested in the non-fatal shooting of former U.S. amateur heavyweight champion **Adam Willett** outside of a Long Island mall in April. Willett, who is recovering at a relative's home, was an alternate on the U.S. 2008 team in Beijing, China ... Tampa, Florida, cruiserweight **Nick Iannuzzi**, 33, has been charged with aggravated battery, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, and domestic battery by strangulation and battery. According to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Iannuzzi, 15-1 (9), allegedly held his live-in girlfriend by the neck, covered her mouth and punched her. He is also accused of allegedly holding a loaded gun to her head and threatening her life ... **Jackie Turpin**, 84, the younger brother of former middleweight champion **Randolph Turpin**, died on April 8 in Warwick, England. Turpin fought as a featherweight in the 1940s and '50s, compiling an 82-34-8 (36) record. Following his retirement from the ring, Turpin ran the Warwick Boxing Club, where he continued to train boxers until he was 80 years old. In 2005, Turpin (along with **W. Terry Fox**) published a critically acclaimed autobiography, *Battling Jack: You Gotta Fight Back.*

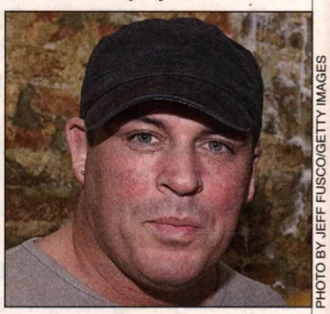


PHOTO BY JEFF FUSCO/GETTY IMAGES

Feldman: Faces fight-fixing charges

Quotable

"I probably have never seen Kelly look so good. I think everybody is going to finally be able to see the best Kelly Pavlik they've seen in a long time."

—Trainer Jack Loew, touting his man two weeks before Pavlik lost the world middleweight championship to Sergio Martinez

"I asked the authorities not to let him out. He needed a lot of help. He was very bad in the head. But they let him out. They were very permissive with him, and because of that, we're now in the middle of this tragedy."

—Jose Castillo, manager of Edwin Valero, criticizing authorities for failing to act more forcefully when the fighter was sent to detox for court-order treatment

Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended April 25, 2010

Heavyweights: Tomasz Adamek debuts at four following his decision victory over Chris Arreola (sixth last issue), who plummets to 10. Eddie Chambers (fourth last issue) and Ruslan Chagaev (fifth last issue) also drop one place each in the realignment. Adamek's debut and the resulting demotions also forces out Tony Thompson (10th last issue).

Cruiserweights: Denis Lebedev (10th last issue) switches with Matt Godfrey (eighth last issue) based on greater activity.

Light Heavyweights: Jean Pascal (fourth last issue) changes places with Bernard Hopkins (third last issue) based on Hopkins' lackluster decision over unranked Roy Jones.

Super Middleweights: Mikkel Kessler (fourth last issue) and Carl Froch (third last issue) trade places following Kessler's decision victory over Froch. Andre Dirrell comes in at six after his disqualification victory of Arthur Abraham (sixth last issue), who drops to seven. Abraham's fall forces down Allan Green (seventh last issue) to eight, while Librado Andrade (eighth last issue) drops two places to 10, pushing out Eduard Gutknecht (10th last issue).

Middleweights: Sergio Martinez becomes the new RING world champion middleweight after beating former champ Kelly Pavlik, who falls to three. Everyone rated three and below drops one, forcing out Roman Karmazin (10th last issue).

Junior Middleweights: No changes.

Welterweights: No changes.

Junior Welterweights: Marcos Maidana (sixth last issue) continues to climb, moving to four after vanquishing Victor Cayo. The move drops Ricky Hatton (fourth last issue) and Paul Malignaggi (fifth last issue) one place each.

Lightweights: The death of Edwin Valero (first last issue) pushes up everyone rated below one spot each and allows John Murray to enter at 10.

Junior Lightweights: No changes.

Featherweights: Rocky Juarez (eighth last issue) exits the ratings after losing to Jason Litzau in a junior lightweight bout. The reshuffling enables Mario Santiago (ninth last issue) and Daniel Ponce De Leon (10th last issue) to climb one rung each and makes room for Celestino Caballero to debut at 10.

Junior Featherweights: Celestino Caballero (first last issue) exits to campaign at featherweight. His departure enables everyone rated two through nine to move up one spot each and makes room for Masaaki Serie to debut at 10.

Bantamweights: No changes.

Junior Bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (second last issue) becomes the first RING flyweight world champion in decades after beating number-one contender Koki Kameda. Everyone from three to seven moves up one spot each, while Luis Concepcion (ninth last issue) jumps two places to seven and Zolani Tete (10th last issue) moves to nine. Cesar Seda debuts at 10.

Junior Flyweights: No changes.

Strawweights: Nkosinathi Joyi's decision victory over Raul Garcia (third last issue) enables Joyi (fourth last issue) to switch places with Garcia.

Pound-for pound: Bernard Hopkins (fourth last issue) tumbles to six following his mundane victory over Roy Jones, which moves up Juan Manuel Marquez (fifth last issue) and Nonito Donaire (sixth last issue) one place each.

The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Welter/Welterweight
2. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
3. **Shane Mosley**
   Welterweight
4. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Lightweight
5. **Nonito Donaire**
   Junior Bantamweight
6. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
7. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
8. **Chad Dawson**
   Light Heavyweight
9. **Paul Williams**
   Middleweight
10. **Celestino Caballero**
    Junior Featherweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **ringtv.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended April 25, 2010

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at ringtv.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

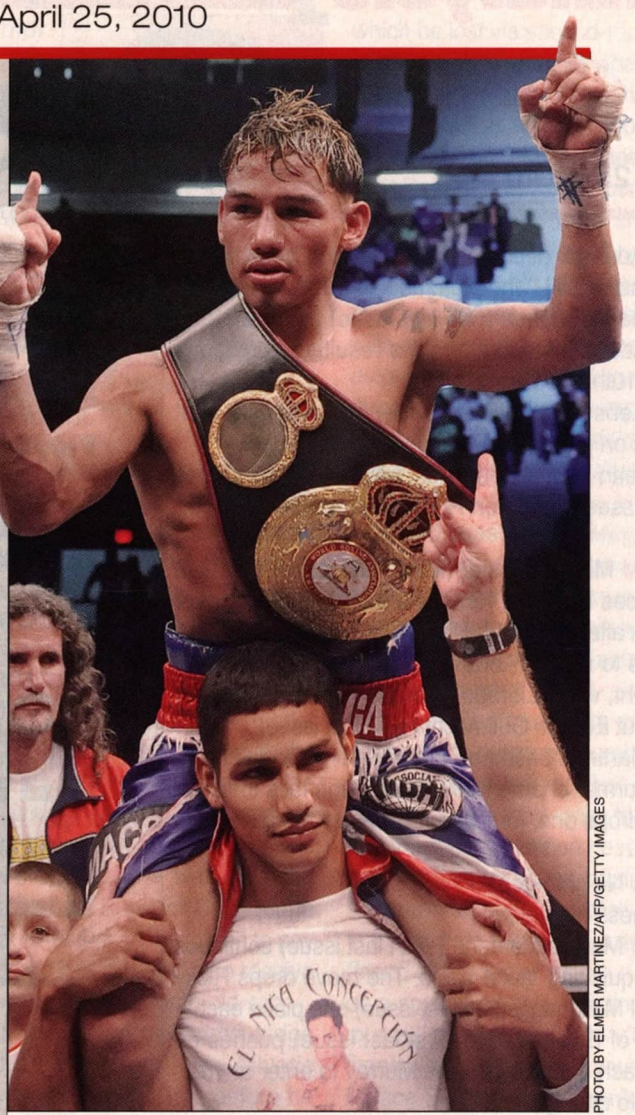


PHOTO BY ELMER MARTINEZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Luis Concepcion moves up the flyweight ratings after stopping Eric Ortiz

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 54-3 (48)

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 39-2 (37)
2. **DAVID HAYE**
England 24-1 (22)
3. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia 19-0 (14)
4. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 41-1 (27)
5. **EDDIE CHAMBERS**
Philadelphia, PA 35-2 (18)
6. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV**
Uzbekistan 25-1-1 (17)
7. **DENIS BOYTSOV**
Russia 27-0 (22)
8. **NICOLAY VALUEV**
Russia 50-2 (34)
9. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO**
Ukraine 29-1 (19)
10. **CHRIS ARREOLA**
Riverside, CA 28-2 (25)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SERGIO MARTINEZ**
Argentina 45-2-2 (24)
2. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 37-5 (11)
3. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 32-2-1 (28)
4. **ALFREDO ANGULO**
Mexico 18-1 (15)
5. **RYAN RHODES**
England 43-4 (29)
6. **SECHEW POWELL**
Brooklyn, NY 26-2 (15)
7. **YURI FOREMAN**
Belarus 28-0 (8)
8. **JOACHIM ALCINE**
Canada 32-1 (19)
9. **VANES MARTIROSYAN**
Armenia 27-0 (17)
10. **DEANDRE LATIMORE**
St. Louis, MO 20-3 (16)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN**
Indonesia 43-0-2 (22)
2. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 28-0 (25)
3. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ**
Mexico 39-11-2 (23)
4. **STEVEN LUEVANO**
La Puente, CA 37-2-1 (15)
5. **BERNABE CONCEPCION**
Philippines 30-2-1 (17)
6. **YURIORKIS GAMBOA**
Cuba 18-0 (15)
7. **ELIO ROJAS**
Dominican Republic 22-1 (13)
8. **MARIO SANTIAGO**
Puerto Rico 21-2-1 (14)
9. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON**
Mexico 38-2 (32)
10. **CELESTINO CABALLERO**
Panama 34-2 (23)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **POONSAWAT KRATINGDAENGGYM**
Thailand 40-1 (28)
2. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 35-4-3 (22)
3. **STEVE MOLITOR**
Canada 32-1 (12)
4. **RICARDO CORDOBA**
Panama 36-2-2 (23)
5. **JEFF MATHEBULA**
South Africa 23-2-2 (13)
6. **RENDALL MUNROE**
England 21-1 (9)
7. **SATOSHI HOSONO**
Japan 16-1 (12)
8. **WILFREDO VAZQUEZ JR.**
Puerto Rico 18-0-1 (15)
9. **KOHEI OBA**
Japan 27-0-1 (11)
10. **MASAAKI SERIE**
Japan 15-4 (6)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA**
Japan 28-2 (12)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO**
Panama 29-1-1 (10)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO**
Ukraine 21-2-2 (7)
4. **YONNHY PEREZ**
Colombia 20-0 (14)
5. **JOSEPH AGBEKO**
Ghana 27-2 (22)
6. **NEHOMAR CERMENO**
Venezuela 19-1 (11)
7. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 22-3 (18)
8. **ABNER MARES**
Mexico 20-0 (13)
9. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 40-3-1 (30)
10. **SASHA BAKHTIN**
Russia 24-0 (11)

Cruiserweights

Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
   Philadelphia, PA 22-2 (11)
2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
   Poland 41-2-1 (31)
3. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
   Hungary 31-0 (17)
4. **MARCO HUCK**
   Yugoslavia 28-1 (21)
5. **GIACOBBE FRAGOMENI**
   Italy 26-2-1 (10)
6. **TROY ROSS**
   Canada 23-1 (16)
7. **DANNY GREEN**
   Australia 29-3 (26)
8. **DENIS LEBEDEV**
   Russia 19-0 (14)
9. **OLA AFOLABI**
   England 14-2-3 (6)
10. **MATT GODFREY**
    Providence, RI 20-1 (10)

Light Heavyweights

Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHAD DAWSON**
   New Haven, CT 29-0 (17)
2. **GLEN JOHNSON**
   Jamaica 50-13-2 (34)
3. **JEAN PASCAL**
   Haiti 25-1 (16)
4. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Philadelphia, PA 51-5-1 (32)
5. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 27-6 (19)
6. **TAVORIS CLOUD**
   Tallahassee, FL 20-0 (18)
7. **VYACHESLAV UZELKOV**
   Ukraine 22-0 (14)
8. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
   Romania 26-2 (15)
9. **KARO MURAT**
   Iraq 21-0 (13)
10. **NATHAN CLEVERLY**
    England 19-0 (9)

Super Middleweights

Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **LUCIAN BUTE**
   Romania 26-0 (21)
2. **ANDRE WARD**
   Oakland, CA 21-0 (13)
3. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
   Denmark 43-2 (32)
4. **CARL FROCH**
   England 26-1 (21)
5. **SAKIO BIKA**
   Cameroon 28-3-2 (19)
6. **ANDRE DIRRELL**
   Flint, MI 19-1 (13)
7. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
   Armenia 31-1 (25)
8. **ALLAN GREEN**
   Tulsa, OK 29-1 (20)
9. **ROBERT STIEGLITZ**
   Germany 38-2 (23)
10. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
    Mexico 28-3 (21)

Middleweights

Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: SERGIO MARTINEZ
Argentina 45-2-2 (24)

1. **FELIX STURM**
   Germany 33-2-1 (14)
2. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
   Augusta, GA 38-1 (27)
3. **KELLY PAVLIK**
   Youngstown, OH 36-2 (32)
4. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
   Germany 33-3 (16)
5. **KHOREN GEVOR**
   Armenia 31-4 (16)
6. **MATTHEW MACKLIN**
   England 26-2 (18)
7. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
   Australia 38-3 (23)
8. **DAVID LOPEZ**
   Mexico 38-12 (23)
9. **DANIEL GEALE**
   Australia 22-1 (13)
10. **SEBASTIAN ZBIK**
    Germany 29-0 (10)

Welterweights

Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Philippines 51-3-2 (38)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Pomona, CA 46-5 (39)
3. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI 40-0 (25)
4. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 34-2 (27)
5. **ANDRE BERTO**
   Winter Haven, FL 26-0 (20)
6. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
   Ghana 35-4 (20)
7. **LUIS COLLAZO**
   Queens, NY 30-4 (15)
8. **RAFAL JACKIEWICZ**
   Poland 36-8-1 (18)
9. **JAN ZAVECK**
   Slovenia 29-1 (17)
10. **VYACHESLAV SENCHENKO**
    Ukraine 30-0 (20)

Jr. Welterweights

Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 51-3-2 (38)

1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
   Palm Springs, CA 25-0 (11)
2. **DEVON ALEXANDER**
   St. Louis, MO 20-0 (13)
3. **AMIR KHAN**
   England 22-1 (16)
4. **MARCOS MAIDANA**
   Argentina 28-1 (27)
5. **RICKY HATTON**
   England 45-2 (32)
6. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
   Brooklyn, NY 27-3 (5)
7. **JUAN URANGO**
   Colombia 22-3-1 (17)
8. **KAIZER MABUZA**
   South Africa 23-6-3 (14)
9. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
   Ukraine 31-3-1 (13)
10. **MIKE ALVARADO**
    Denver, CO 27-0 (19)

Lightweights

Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
Mexico 50-5-1 (37)

1. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
   Australia 26-2 (21)
2. **ALI FUNEKA**
   South Africa 30-3-3 (25)
3. **ROLANDO REYES**
   Mexico 31-4-2 (20)
4. **MIGUEL VAZQUEZ**
   Mexico 25-3 (12)
5. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
   Washington, DC 29-0 (19)
6. **PAULUS MOSES**
   Namibia 25-0 (17)
7. **MIGUEL ACOSTA**
   Venezuela 26-9-2 (20)
8. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
   Mexico 51-7-2 (32)
9. **KEVIN MITCHELL**
   England 31-0 (23)
10. **JOHN MURRAY**
    England 28-0 (16)

Jr. Lightweights

Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERT GUERRERO**
   Gilroy, CA 25-1-1 (17)
2. **MZONKE FANA**
   South Africa 29-4 (12)
3. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
   Puerto Rico 23-0-1 (14)
4. **MALCOLM KLASSEN**
   South Africa 24-5-2 (15)
5. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
   South Africa 37-4-1 (19)
6. **TAKASHI UCHIYAMA**
   Japan 14-0 (11)
7. **JUAN CARLOS SALGADO**
   Mexico 21-1-1 (15)
8. **JORGE LINARES**
   Venezuela 28-1 (18)
9. **JORGE SOLIS**
   Mexico 38-2-2 (28)
10. **VITALI TAJBERT**
    Kazakhstan 19-1 (6)

Jr. Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
   Armenia 34-2-1 (27)
2. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
   Japan 13-1-1 (8)
3. **SIMPHIWE NONGQAYI**
   South Africa 16-0-1 (6)
4. **HUGO CAZARES**
   Mexico 30-6-2 (22)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
   Venezuela 34-3 (27)
6. **KOHEI KONO**
   Japan 24-4 (8)
7. **NONITO DONAIRE**
   Philippines 23-1 (15)
8. **DAIGO NAKAHIRO**
   Japan 21-2-1 (8)
9. **DRIAN FRANCISCO**
   Philippines 19-0-1 (15)
10. **JORGE ARCE**
    Mexico 54-6-1 (41)

Flyweights

Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM
Thailand 75-3-1 (39)

1. **KOKI KAMEDA**
   Japan 22-1 (14)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
   Japan 35-3-3 (22)
3. **DAIKI KAMEDA**
   Japan 16-2 (11)
4. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
   Thailand 49-2-1 (20)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina 31-0-2 (19)
6. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
   Japan 36-5-2 (17)
7. **LUIS CONCEPCION**
   Panama 20-1 (15)
8. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
   South Africa 25-2 (16)
9. **ZOLANI TETE**
   South Africa 12-0 (11)
10. **CESAR SEDA**
    Puerto Rico 18-0 (14)

Jr. Flyweights

Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 33-0-1 (6)

1. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
   Mexico 24-1-1 (20)
2. **RODEL MAYOL**
   Philippines 26-4-2 (20)
3. **CARLOS TAMARA**
   Colombia 21-4 (15)
4. **EDGAR SOSA**
   Mexico 37-6 (21)
5. **BRIAN VILORIA**
   Waipahu, HI 26-3 (15)
6. **ULISES SOLIS**
   Mexico 30-2-2 (21)
7. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
   Argentina 23-1 (13)
8. **JOHNRIEL CASIMERO**
   Philippines 14-0 (8)
9. **OMAR NINO**
   Mexico 28-3-2 (11)
10. **HEKKIE BUDLER**
    South Africa 14-0 (5)

Strawweights

Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
   Nicaragua 25-0 (21)
2. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
   Thailand 34-0 (12)
3. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
   South Africa 21-0 (15)
4. **RAUL GARCIA**
   Mexico 27-1-1 (16)
5. **DONNIE NIETES**
   Philippines 26-1-3 (15)
6. **FLORANTE CONDES**
   Philippines 23-5-1 (20)
7. **JUAN PALACIOS**
   Nicaragua 26-3 (21)
8. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
   Indonesia 62-8-5 (31)
9. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
   Japan 23-4 (9)
10. **YASUTAKA KUROKI**
    Japan 23-4-1 (15)

By Jeff Ryan

Class Action

Some things that are accepted as fact in boxing simply aren't. Among them is the belief that there are far too many weight classes. What? Seventeen seems like overkill to you? Give me a break. You stuffy purists calling for a return to the original eight divisions probably want the National Hockey League to go back to its Original Six teams and the NCAA basketball tournament to revisit those days when only 32 schools were invited to the big dance, don't you?

Well, in reality, the fight game doesn't have nearly enough divisions, subdivisions, and subdivided subdivisions to meet the needs of its competitors. From this vantage point, 17 weight classes appear to be at least, oh, a dozen too few. (By the way, the WBA, WBC, and IBF will back me up on this, and only a hopeless cynic would imply that it has anything to do with extra sanctioning fees.) Take a close look at the world ratings and you'll realize that too many fighters are forced to campaign at weights that just aren't natural for them. And that's not right. So let's fix it.

It's time for boxing to expand like Kirstie Alley's midriff after a late-night Dairy Queen run. What follows are my suggestions for 12 brand new and very improved divisions. (Granted, the expansion might require devoting several more pages to "THE RING Ratings" and "Ratings Analysis," but for the good of the magazine, Nigel Collins, Ivan Goldman, and Jim Bagg, team players all, shouldn't object to giving up their columns.)

If you're one of the few people out there who can name all 17 current divisions in under a minute, good for you. Now get busy memorizing these:

- **Norwegian cruiserweight:** No, this isn't a weight class for 195-pounders who hail from Oslo. It's a special division devoted to those fighters whose physical conditioning makes it appear that they've just concluded not a grueling training camp, but a two-month vacation on Norwegian Cruise Lines. The current undisputed champion is Chris Arreola. When you look at him, you're not thinking chin-ups, speed bag, and sparring. You're thinking chimichangas, half-in-the-bag, and shuffleboard.

- **Stupor middleweight:** Here's a special classification for 168-pounders who were separated from their senses so thoroughly that they not only ended up on Queer Street, but got hit by a cement mixer while trying to cross it. Jermain Taylor, who was pasted by Carl Froch and Arthur Abraham, seemed like the best reason to create this division. That is, until Andre Dirrell ate an Abraham cheap shot and ended up so woozy during a post-fight interview that he thought he'd been kayoed cleanly.

- **Heavyweight light:** Not to be confused, of course, with light heavyweight. This weight class is reserved for big men who haven't always been big men. Or, to put it another way, guys who do a pretty good job of throwing their weight around even though they don't have as much weight to throw around. That would be former cruiserweight David Haye and ex-light heavy Tomasz Adamek, who are tired of picking on guys their own size.

- **Endlesswait:** Yeah, for these relics to call it quits. This division is populated by graybeards that couldn't learn to say "bye-bye" if they got lessons from a crew of flight attendants. The appeal of Evander Holyfield, John Ruiz, Bernard Hopkins, Roy Jones, Frans Botha, Lamon Brewster, and others is long past its expiration date. Can't we put these geriatrics on waivers or something?

- **36-minute wait:** At last, we've found a perfect place for boxers whose bouts are guaranteed to last all 12 rounds.

PHOTO BY MARY ANN OWEN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Botha and Holyfield: Charter members of the "Endlesswait" division

"B-Hop," Paulie Malignaggi, Felix Sturm, Yuri Foreman, and Cory Spinks are a better bet to go all the way than two horny teenagers left alone in a beachfront condo for a weekend. For possessing the killer instinct and kayo power of the Dalai Lama, the aforementioned long-distance carriers are loved by everybody from the judges to the sponsors buying TV time to the parking lot attendants being paid by the hour.

• **Phantomweight:** This division seems perfect for all those fighters that climb on the scale a day before their bouts, make weight with ease, then leave the weigh-in and spend the next 24 hours attacking food with a fury that makes a great white shark look like an anorexic gymnast. By the time the opening bell sounds, they've gone up one or two weight classes and three pant sizes.

• **Stay-out-lateweight:** Whoever said this division will be known for its endless parity misunderstood. That's endless *party*. Fighters who burn the midnight oil faster than a Winnebago that hasn't had a tuneup since the Clinton Administration need a weight class to call home. Whether he fights again or not, we're awarding Ricky Hatton THE RING Championship Belt right now, and he can lead everyone in a champagne toast (or three) to himself.

• **Needleweight:** Enter all who are willing to submit to Federal Boxing Commissioner Floyd Mayweather's blood-testing plan. After he rids the Sweet Science of steroid cheats, "Money" intends to go after baseball players, Olympic weight lifters, and everyone in the Tour de France. His motto: "Watch your back—especially if it's covered with zits."

• **Heatherweight:** When we're dealing with women's boxing, we have to realize that it's, well, *women's* boxing. So even if a girl is tough enough to kick every guy's ass at a construction site, she still wants to get whistled at when she walks past it.

That's why, no matter the weight at which a distaff duke-out is contested, the two combatants are going to be introduced as "Heatherweights." It's a nod to actress Heather Locklear, and the name suggests attractiveness, femininity, and, most importantly, thinness. That should once and for all ensure that female fighters stop putting their cornermen on the spot with questions like, "Do these trunks make my butt look big?"

• **Weight off his shoulders:** This would be a refuge for warriors who are looking for redemption, revenge or some other form of closure following defeats, subpar performances, or unsatisfying outcomes in their past. It doesn't matter if it's Hopkins waiting 17 years to pay back Jones or Malignaggi coming back four months after the judges robbed him to get revenge against Juan Diaz. The newest entry in this class is Sergio Martinez, who's looking to avenge his 2009 draw with Kermit Cintron and majority decision loss to Paul Williams, both questionable verdicts.

• **All-time greatweight:** There's no top 30, or even a top 20, in this exclusive division, which is nicknamed "Canastota's Waiting Room." It's where the legends can hang out while awaiting their call to the International Boxing Hall of Fame. As of now, we've reserved couch space for Holyfield, Hopkins, and Jones (if they ever retire), as well as the Klitschko Brothers, Mayweather, Manny Pacquiao, and Juan Manuel Marquez.

• **Piddleweight:** If other fighters were inspired by Marquez' revelation that he drinks his own urine during training, and they choose to follow his lead, this division could feature more depth than the floor of a flooded men's room.

And a weight class full of guys like Marquez could be a headline writer's dream. A sloppy battle for the unification crown might be described as "The Muddle in the Puddle." Two top contenders squaring off in Biloxi could be previewed under the banner "Gettin' Pissy in Missi." And it's a good bet that any faded warrior who defies calls for his retirement and revives his career with a move to piddleweight would inspire the headline "You Say Goodbye, But I Say Yellow." ■

PHOTO BY JUNG YEON-JE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

South Korea's Hyun Mi Choi sure looks like a "Heatherweight" to us

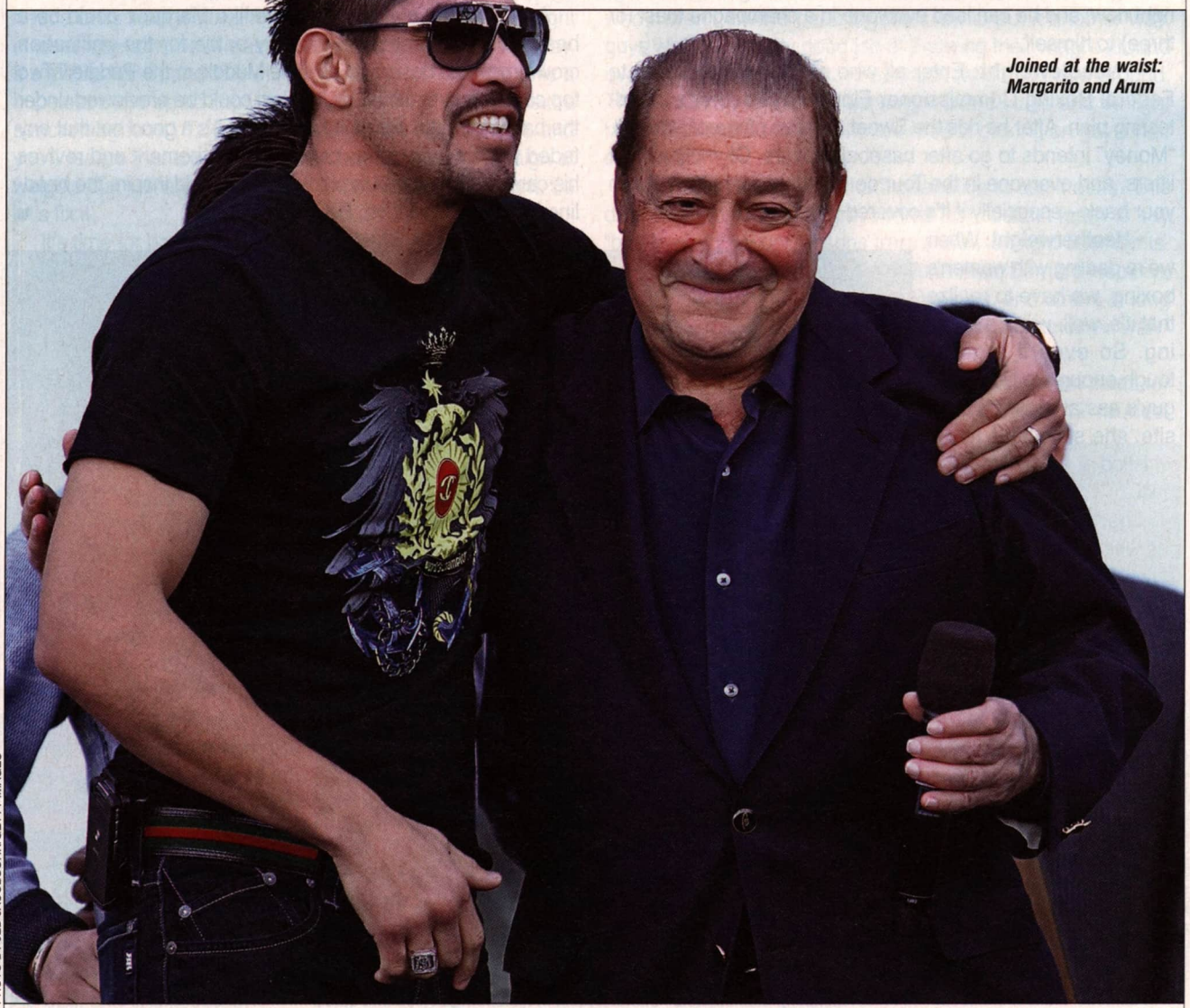
By Ivan Goldman

California Opens Door A Crack For Plast-A-Rito

Ex-cop John Frierson, who chairs the California commission, suggests disgraced Antonio Margarito try a new tactic in his determined bid for another U.S. license: Tell the truth for a change.

Unless you've spent the last couple years on Mars, you know Tijuana-based Plast-a-rito was caught with Plaster of Paris in his wraps before going out to face Shane Mosley in January 2009 in Los Angeles, and that the state commission lifted the licenses of him and his trainer for a year.

At the time, everyone expected Margarito to return to California to seek another license at the end of his 12-month suspension. But the state Attorney General's Office believes it has evidence that Margarito used loaded gloves in his Las Vegas contest with Miguel Cotto, so if he goes back to California he



Joined at the waist: Margarito and Arum

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

may face questions that would make his case smell worse than it already does. Also, the commission is now chaired by Frierson, a former amateur fighter (and the commission's first African-American chairman) who's actually worn wraps. "You know it if something is in your gloves," he told me, "you feel it."

Margarito's lawyer, Daniel Petrocelli, apparently has convinced the New York *Daily News* that his client is this century's version of Anne Frank, only with a mustache—a sweet, innocent soul who's being victimized for no good reason by a vicious oligarchy of villains and sadists.

Me, I always like to be helpful. So when I read a statement by Petrocelli reported in the *Daily News*, I called Frierson and read it to him:

"Petrocelli noted that his client was absolved of any wrongdoing during the [California] hearing and that he was the victim in the whole episode. The blame was put squarely on the shoulders of Margarito's trainer, Javier Capetillo," and etc.

"That's not true," said Frierson, who pointed out that the commissioners disbelieved Margarito's story at the postfight hearing and found him culpable, which is why they suspended him. "If he comes back and says, 'Yeah, I'm sorry this happened,' I'm sure we would let him go on, no problem. But he's still talking that crap, and we're not going to take that. We're not going to be insulted as a commission."

A little background: The *Daily News* sports desk is manned by the same clowns who printed an unsubstantiated story by Tim Smith that someone from Manny Pacquiao's camp had basically admitted he used illegal steroids via text messages. Did Smith rely on information from the Mayweather camp? Junior, Senior, and Roger all have long, ugly rap sheets, apparently that makes them ideal *Daily News* sources.

Notice that by saying Petrocelli "noted" his client was absolved of any wrongdoing, the newspaper employed language that accepts the preposterous, easily disproved claim. But given the reporting skills of the *Daily News*, maybe Petrocelli was actually talking about another client.

Petrocelli, representing Ron Goldman's father (no relation), won an $8.5-million wrongful death suit against O.J. Simpson. He also represents Pacquiao in his defamation suit against the Mayweathers.

If California inspectors had been on their toes, they'd have had Margarito and Capetillo arrested after the Mosley fight on suspicion of conspiracy to commit aggravated assault. Pros hit harder than most people realize. Put plaster in their wraps and it's like swinging two hammers in there. It can make even a wide, sloppy puncher like Margarito into a world-beater—or possibly a killer.

Meanwhile, promoter Bob Arum slipped him onto a pay-per-view card in Mexico as the sleazy search continued for some miserable U.S. jurisdiction willing to print him another license. Plast-a-rito is also appealing the original commission ruling to a California court in an effort to change the outcome without going back to the commission itself. At a prefight press conference in downtown L.A., Arum offered a free lunch to any members of the media willing to show up. A press release distributed by skilled freelance publicist Fred Sternburg celebrating Plaster-man's "2010 debut" artfully skipped over the ugly details that knocked him out of the sport in the first place. When Bernie Madoff gets out of the joint in 149 years, he should hire Sternburg to polish his resume.

Shot, Deluded Fighters: "Reality," said visionary science fiction writer Philip K. Dick, "is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away." Right. I still remember the hurt I felt when it finally hit me that Penelope Cruz would probably never invite me over for a beer and a back rub.

But that was a harmless fantasy. Lately we seem to have more than the usual share of shot fighters who presume they can chase away demon truth and replace it with their own, possibly dangerous hallucinations. Some, like Erik Morales, briefly recognize the facts and get off the magic merry-go-round. But discovering that he couldn't stand life as an ordinary mortal,

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Why did the New York* Daily News *malign Manny without proof?

Morales climbed back on (with a lot of extra pounds). Others, like Evander Holyfield, refuse to get off in the first place.

These fighters share tenacity assisted by selective memory. They remember the tip-top outings of their youth and chalk up their downward trajectories to the wrong diet, a fluke, an injury, or a split second of inattention that they tell themselves could happen to anybody.

They're like the birthers who refuse to accept that Barack Obama is American or men who fashion elaborate comb-overs across their baldheads, fooling no one, not even little kids, but somehow managing to fool themselves.

John Ruiz, grappling his way to nowhere in the heavyweight division, found himself, at age 38, practically defenseless against young British lion David Haye, who kayoed him in nine. And Roy Jones, who as a younger fighter spoke plainly and often about his fear of taking too many punches, is out there, at age 41, taking too many punches.

Morales says he seeks another piece of Pacquiao. Yet Pacquiao has stepped *up* his game since he destroyed Morales in three rounds back in 2006. And when Morales retired in 2007, he'd lost five of his last six. Does he really expect Pac-Man to consider him a worthy opponent now? In a word, yes. That's what his imagination tells him.

Anyone can see that Holyfield, now 47, hasn't fought like Evander Holyfield in years. Yet he dragged the spent Francis

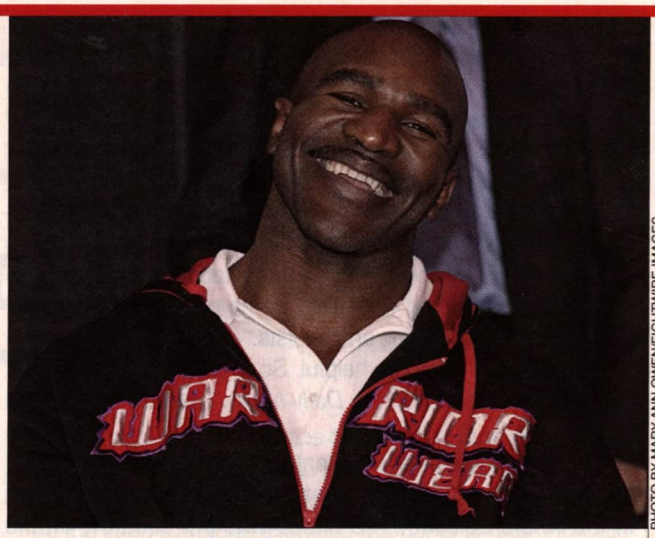
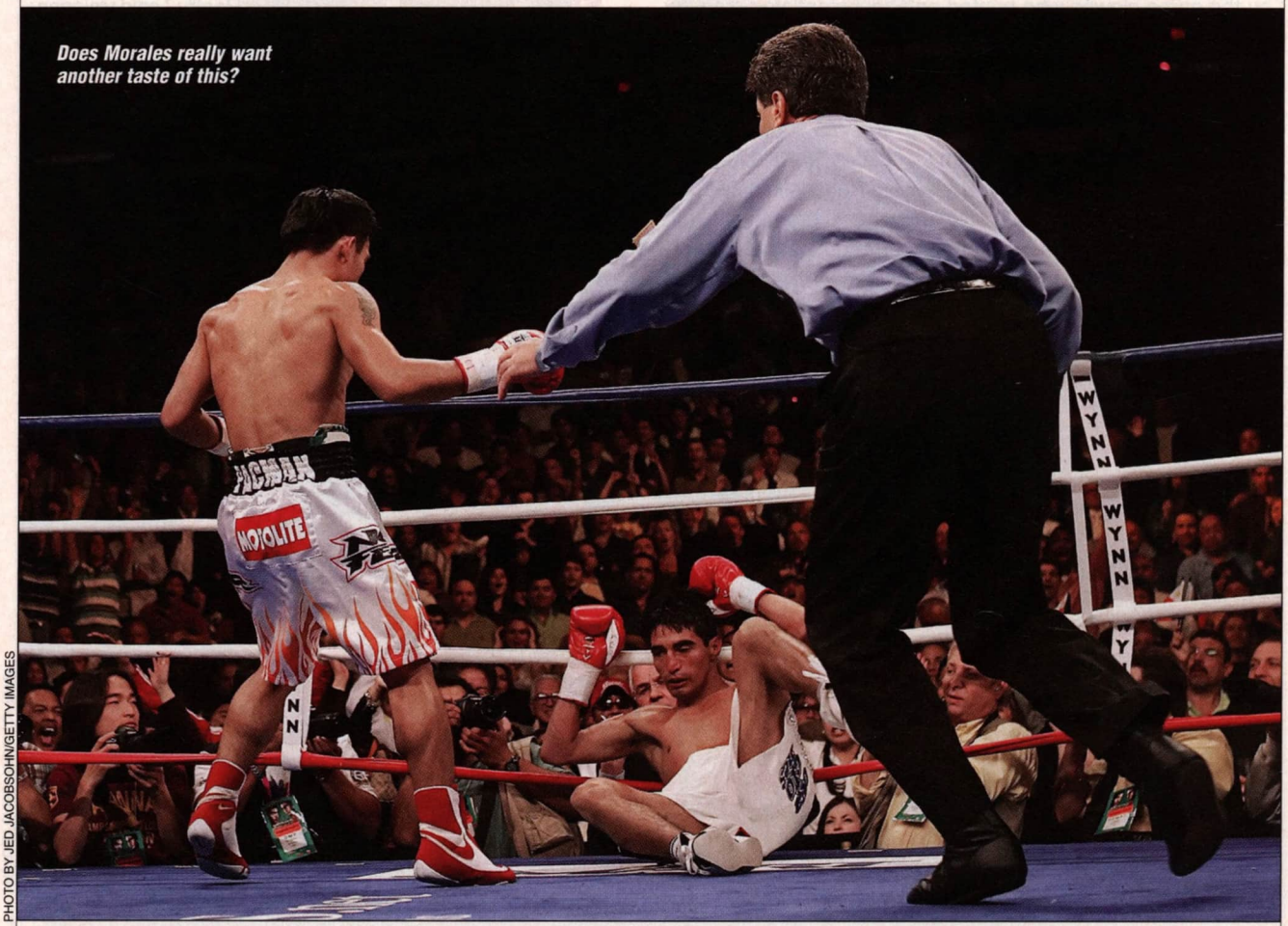


PHOTO BY MARY ANN OWEN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

There's nothing funny about Evander's deteriorating skills

Botha out of South Africa so he could kayo him in Las Vegas in a bout that attracted barely any interest. Fortunately fans usually detect baloney and react by keeping their wallets in their pockets. Footnote: A "world" sanctioning body awarded Evander a title for his victory.

Pointless contests fought by deluded, used-up fighters couldn't happen without the cooperation of licensing commissions. Ten years ago, when Terry Norris tried to come out of



Does Morales really want another taste of this?

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

retirement, Nevada denied him a license. He was only 32, but his speech had the telltale sound of an ex-fighter who seems to be talking through a mouthful of mashed potatoes.

Fight expert and RING columnist Dr. Margaret Goodman has said for years that Holyfield shows signs of dangerous deterioration. But in 2000 when the commission denied Norris, the federal budget had a record surplus of $230-billion and visitors were pouring into Las Vegas. This year the federal *deficit* is expected to come in at around $1.2-trillion and the city's tourist numbers are way down. These changed economic circumstances may have lots to do with why the 2010 commission is more willing to gamble with fighters' brain cells.

Magoo Lite: To Joe Cortez for ruling it a knockdown when Marcos Maidana dropped Victor Cayo after the bell.

Magoo One: The skills of Texas referee Laurence Cole are in such demand that he was dispatched all the way up to Michigan to screw up the Andre Dirrell-Arthur Abraham fight. Critics blasted Cole for starting a count when Dirrell slipped to the canvas in the 11th round of their "Super Six" contest and took a cheap shot from Abraham. But the bigger Cole mistake was being in the center of the ring as the two men went at it in the corner. Had he been anywhere around the action, where he was supposed to be, he'd have been in position to jump between the two fighters and prevent the ruined conclusion to a heck of a fight. How far away was Cole? Well, the Joe Louis Arena is in Detroit. He looked to be somewhere on the outskirts of Kalamazoo.

Much as I applaud Dirrell's spirited victory, Abraham was coming on, and we don't know how the fight would have ended had it been decently officiated. In round 10, Abraham executed a clean knockdown from a straight right hand that Cole called a slip.

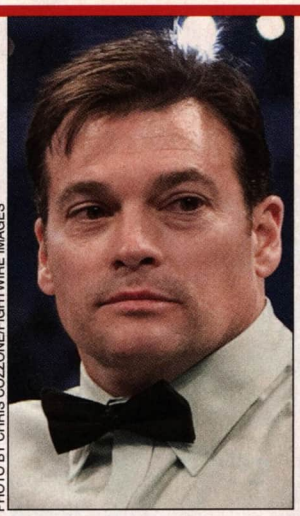


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Laurence Cole: Serial screw-up

Magoo Two: Why did referee Malik Waleed stand there like a dodo bird as Fernando Guerrero rained punch after punch on the helpless Michael Walker in Salisbury, Maryland? He was so bent on not missing a thing that he paid no attention to the ring physician yelling at him to get in there and prevent a homicide. He was still watching when the doctor jumped into the ring and yanked him out of his trance.

Cole and Waleed, who apparently have a natural talent for standing around confused and doing the wrong thing, would have made perfect banking regulators.

Magoo Three: To the Nevada commission: When Joan Guzman weighed in nine pounds over the limit against Ali Funeka, he should have been allowed to collect some of his purse only if he competed with nine pounds of cement strapped to his back. Like extra weight, Joan? Here's some more.

Question: Floyd Junior needs *seven* bodyguards? What's he expecting? A tank attack? ■

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Guzman makes a mockery of Funeka weigh-in

[Camera Clicks]

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Hey, does that shirt say "Scores"? Are you telling us that some round-card girls double as exotic dancers? Say it ain't so! This pic was taken at a recent show in New York City, where Leo Martinez earned a Stingray Award by upsetting Joel Torres. This round-card girl didn't get a Stingray, but she did get a nice $20 tip from Jim Bagg later in the evening.

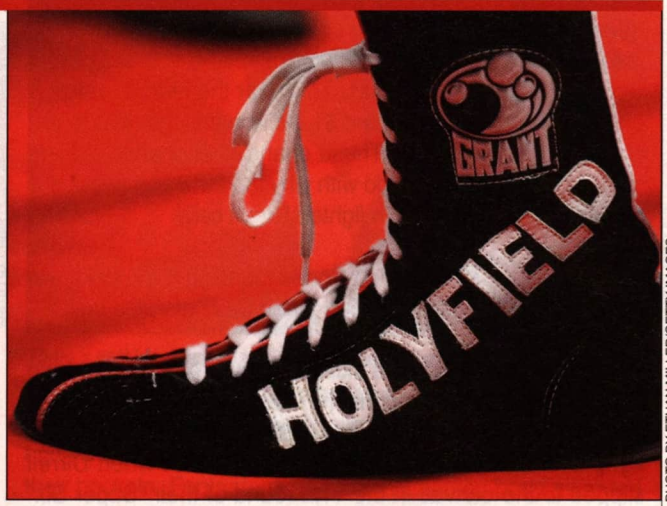


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

This photo would make for a good advertisement if Michael Grant ever fought Evander Holyfield. (Oh no, we hope we didn't just give some desperate promoter an idea.) Holyfield and his custom shoes, designed by the company Grant, proved too much for Frans Botha in April, as "The Real Deal" proved better at age 47 than Botha is at 41. As Mars Blackmon would say, "It's gotta be the shoes." Or maybe it's just the fact that the opponent was Frans Botha.

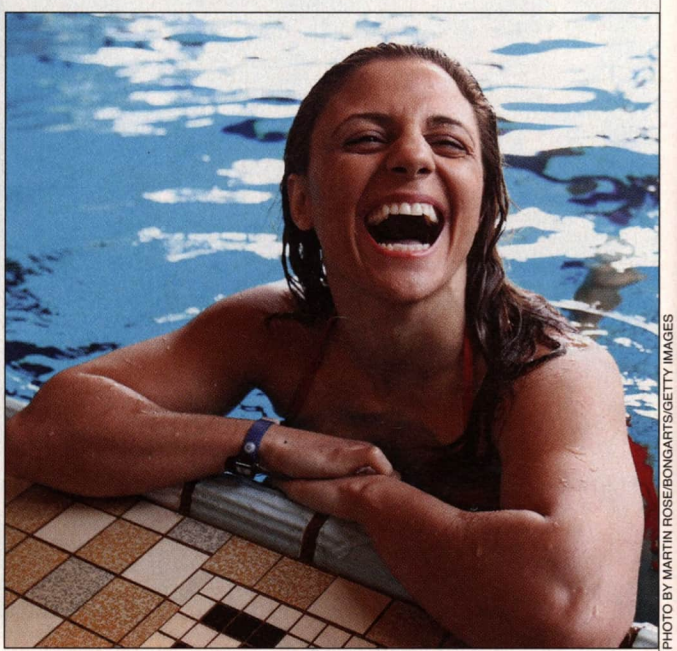


PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

You know that cliché veteran boxers trot out about taking a young fighter into deep waters and seeing if that fighter can swim? Well, it appears top female flyweight Susi Kentikian is interpreting it rather literally in her training. Either that, or she's an actual fly, not a flyweight, and this is a closeup of her trapped in a spit bucket. In any case, when she stepped into the ring a few weeks after this aquatic training session, she just barely kept her head above water, retaining her undefeated record via controversial split decision over Nadia Raoui.

PHOTO BY ALEXIS CUAREZMA/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

At an open workout at the San Jose Boxing and Fitness Club in April, lightweight contender Robert Guerrero, whose wife Casey is battling leukemia, taught some boxing techniques to six-year-old blood cancer survivor Aiden Bowen, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's 2010 "Boy Of The Year." Bowen is a brave, tough kid—not only for battling his disease, but also for bringing back a hairstyle we haven't seen in boxing since a young Freddie Roach.

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Tired of trying to be the next Sugar Ray, Shane Mosley is now trying to be the next Walter Ray instead. (For those with minimal bowling knowledge, that would be Walter Ray Williams Jr., the all-time leader in career bowling titles.) Sugar Shane participates in a bowling league while he's training for fights in Big Bear, California, and rumor has it that prior to his fight with Antonio Margarito, he prepared for Margarito's punch by having bowling balls thrown at his head.

By Don Stewart
PHOTOS BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Odlanier Solis Heavyweight

Odlanier Solis trains three times a day. He spends the majority of his time at his coach's Miami, Florida, training camp. He drives there in a modest 1996 Chevy Yukon, having left the gold-plated Hummer he bought with his signing bonus back in Germany. His diet is strictly regimented. His body-fat count is a mere seven percent.

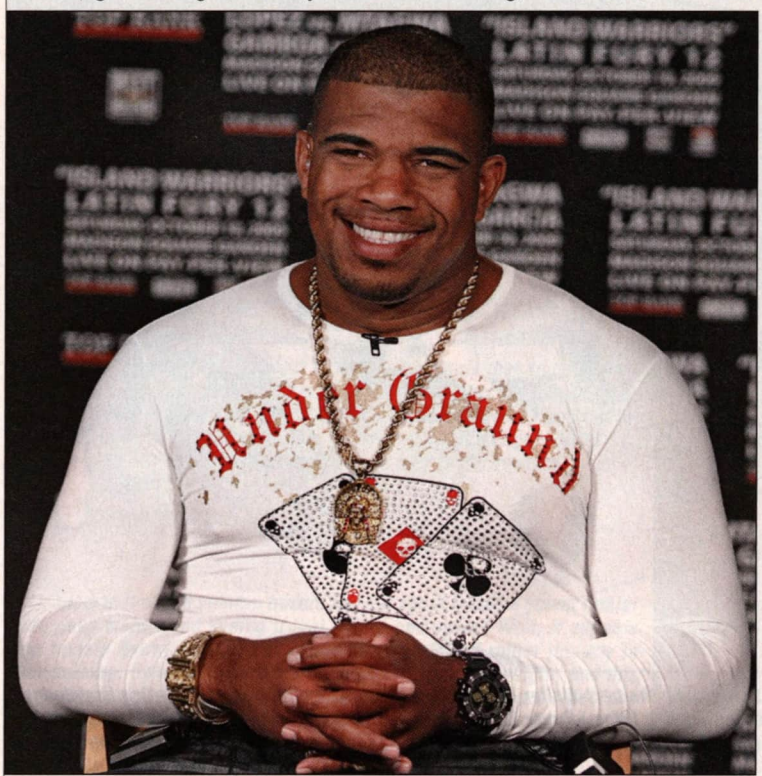
Is any of this true? Well, going solely by what can be seen on a television screen, the above claims by Team Solis make the rising heavyweight's handlers sound more like used-car salesmen than serious professionals.

To most observers, the 6'1" Cuban's physique has looked more like Flabio than Fabio. Solis checked in at 268½ pounds for his March stoppage of Carl Drumond, only 2½ pounds below the career-high mass he sported for his October kayo of Monte Barrett. He left the amateurs weighing roughly 230.

"I'm a little bit concerned about what people think of my weight," Solis said through a translator, co-manager Jose Perez. "But I'm not worried. Ask the guys I've fought in the last four or five fights if my weight has been a problem. It's been a problem for them."

Perez' description of Solis is that of a rock-solid athlete with an NFL linebacker's body. The weight gain has been the result of strength training. Solis only looks fat in the ring, Perez said, because of his preference for wearing baggy trunks high over his stomach. Perez also used the old TV-adds-20-pounds excuse. "You should see this guy," Perez said. "He's a great specimen."

Solis and his team might be right. The problem for the 2004 Olympic gold medalist is that he's a North American heavyweight. Fans have been burned too many times over the past 30 years in their search for the next great heavyweight. For every chiseled Mike Tyson or Evander Holyfield, there seems to have been at least three with an apparent eating disorder (see: James Toney, Buster Douglas, Chris Arreola, etc.).



The truth usually lies somewhere in the middle. Solis did look overweight, sloppy, and unexceptional back in January 2009, when he debuted in the United States with an ESPN2-televised eighth-round knockout of Kevin Burnett. Shortly thereafter, he was reunited with his amateur trainer, Pedro Luis Diaz.

The former Cuban national coach has brought back the structure and round-the-clock discipline Solis might have lacked under his previous professional trainers. Most importantly, Diaz has Solis' respect. "I told my promoter [Ahmet Oner]: 'I either train with this guy, or I don't fight anymore. I'm quitting,'" said Solis.

Since returning to Diaz, Solis has rattled off three-straight quick kayos. In March, five months after he mauled former top-10 contender Barrett in two rounds, Solis breezed through Drumond in a Fox Sports Net-televised main event truncated by Drumond's refusal to come out for the fourth round. Solis showed fast hands, veteran poise, and improved power.

Drumond took a respectable 26-2 (20) record into his meeting with Solis but proved to be as fearsome as Mr. Drummond from *Diff'rent Strokes*. He offered little in retaliation to the stalking Solis, and after nearly hitting the floor from a barrage of blows near the end of the third round, told his corner he was done.

(Continued on Page 107)

Pro Record

2007		
April 27	Andreas Sidon, Hamburg, Germany	KO 1
June 16	Alexey Mazikin, Ankara, Turkey	KO 1
July 6	Aldo Colliander, Hamburg	W 4
Sept. 21	Marcus McGee, Holstein, Germany	KO 2
Oct. 19	Jeremy Bates, Berlin, Germany	KO 2
Dec. 12	Julius Long, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany	W 8
2008		
Feb. 29	Adrian Rajkai, Lombardi, Italy	KO 3
March 14	Cisse Salif, Munich, Germany	W 8
April 26	Mamuka Jikurashvili, Trabzon, Turkey	KO 2
June 7	Harry Diuven, Hessen, Germany	W 8
Sept. 12	Chad Van Sickle, Niedersachen, Germany	KO 1
Oct. 11	Chauncy Welliver, Berlin	KO 9
2009		
Jan. 9	Kevin Burnett, Primm, NV	KO 8
June 12	Dominique Alexander, Miami, FL	KO 1
Oct. 10	Monte Barrett, New York, NY	KO 2
2010		
March 20	Carl Drumond, Key West, FL	KO 3

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
16	16	0	0	12

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BERNARD HOPKINS

Rages Against The Dying Of The Light

By Nigel Collins

It was late Thursday afternoon, two days before the fight, and Bernard Hopkins sat on a metal folding chair inside Johnny Tocco's Gym, his lean, lithe body belying the flecks of gray in his chin grizzle. He was getting ready for his final workout before his 17-years-in-the-making rematch with Roy Jones, Saturday night at the Mandalay Bay.

They've cleaned up the gym since Johnny died in 1997, but it's still a dump and reeks of almost 60 years of sweat and god-knows-what else. Just the sort of place an old-school fighter like Hopkins feels at home. There's even a poster for a Salvador Sanchez fight at Cesars Palace tacked to the wall, and Sanchez has been dead since 1982.

Hopkins, finished lacing up his boxing boot, leaned in close to a reporter's face, and said: "After I kick Roy Jones' ass, I'm going to fight David Haye. It's already in the works."

In the enchanted time before a fight, when anything is possible and the future remains both tantalizing and terrifying, it wasn't too much of a stretch to imagine Hopkins matching wits with the charismatic WBA heavyweight titleholder.

The illusion was enhanced when Hopkins, after a few rounds of shadow boxing, began to hit the pads. John David Jackson's hands weren't quite fast enough to keep up with all of the old champ's combinations. But when B-Hop stepped in with his straight right, it had that sweet thwack of a major-league fastball slamming into a catcher's mitt.

Later, on the ride back to the hotel in the team van, somebody mentioned to Hopkins' trainer, Naazim Richardson, that Bernard (who'd gone ahead in a car) had said he wanted to fight Haye.

"Bernard says a lot of things," said Naazim, looking up briefly and then back down to the copy of THE RING he was reading.

◆◆◆

The most conspicuous sign that the Hopkins-Jones promotion was in trouble was propped against the pillow in every guest room at the Mandalay Bay. It was a postcard hyping the fight and offering "two tickets for the price of one."

The truth is that the Hopkins-Jones rematch died on December 2, 2009, the day Danny Green stopped Jones in less than a round in Australia. Sure, Hopkins upheld his end of the double tune-up by beating Enrique Ornelas a few hours later, but what could have been a match of considerable interest instantly became a nonstarter. Or so we thought.

Time passed, and after a series of other matches for Hopkins were floated and quickly sunken, Golden Boy Promotions announced it was indeed going forward with Hopkins-

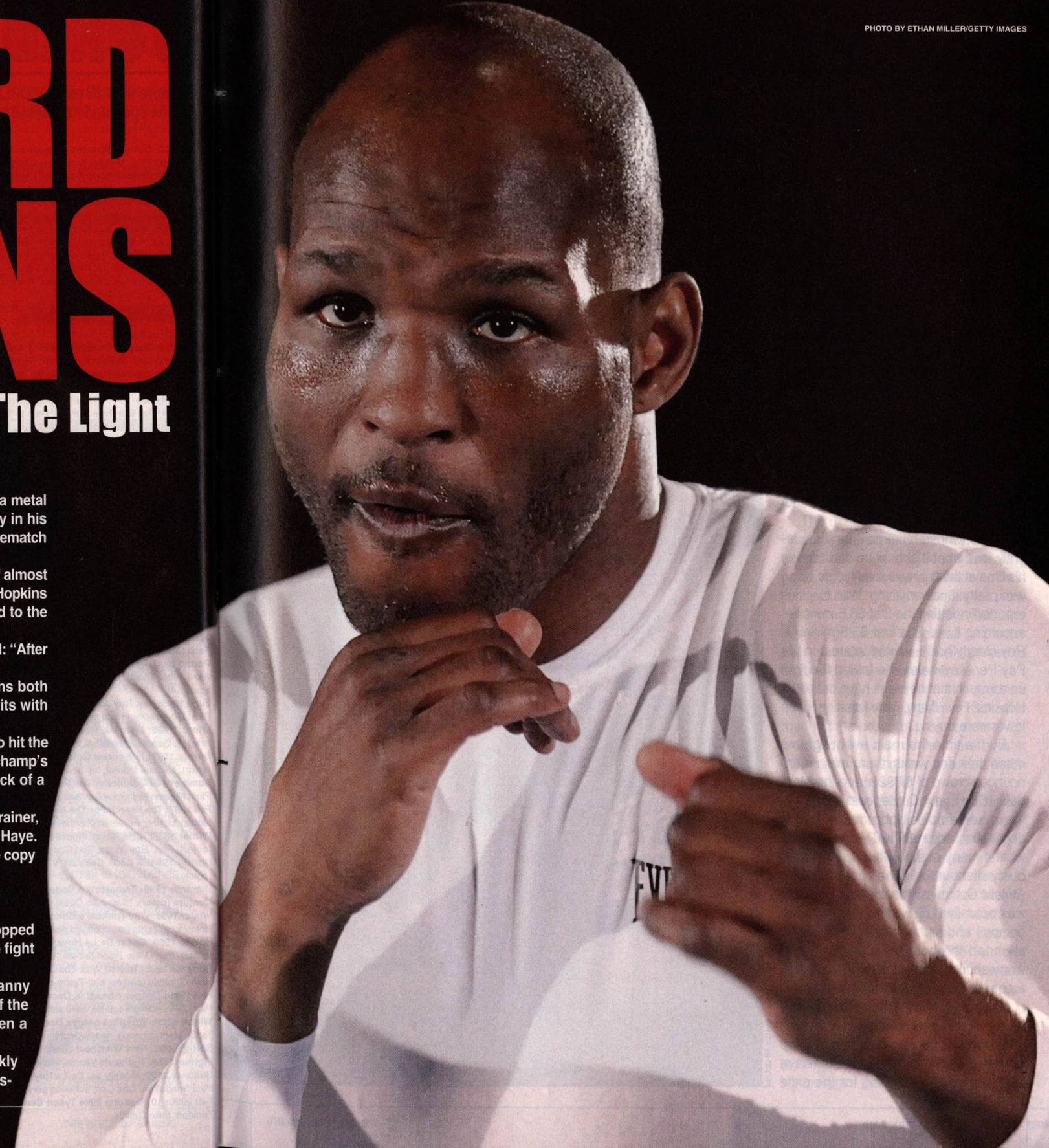

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Jones II on its own (no HBO licensing fee), on Pay-Per-View, no less.

The news was greeted by yelps of protest from virtually every media outlet, while the public's response ranged from disgust to monumental disinterest. No amount of hype or protestation from the fighters or promoters made any difference and the media flogging continued unabated.

There are two types of matches in boxing: the ones the fans want to see and "business fights." The former keeps us hooked, while the latter greases the wheels of boxing's Byzantine machinery. Hopkins-Jones II was a business fight. The driving force behind it? An aging and disgruntled Hopkins, who demanded a decent payday to partially make up for the 15 months he sat following his masterful, upset victory over then-middleweight world champion Kelly Pavlik.

"This fight was made because I forced it," Hopkins told THE RING. "Golden Boy could say I pushed it into this fight, and I would agree. This fight was put together because I needed to fight and I kind of forced the fight to happen."

Jones, whose retirement fund apparently isn't what it should be considering his time at the top, was ready to go along with pretty much anything. With Hopkins reportedly getting the first $3.5-million—assuming there is a first $3.5-million—Roy clearly had a vested interest in the Pay-Per-View sales. He talked the fight up so much that he might have outtalked Hopkins. Few, if any, were listening. Even fewer were buying.

By the time the main event fighters made their ring walks, there was an announced crowd of 6,792 inside the Mandalay Bay Event Center, just enough to make some noise and provide a half-decent backdrop for the TV cameras. So what if many of the tickets were generously discounted (The Nevada State Athletic Commission said the attendance was actually 6,551 with 2,311 of those comps.) and most of the sporting world shunned the bout? It was too late to worry about that, and if it turned out to be a good fight, all would be forgiven.

Maybe Hopkins' vaudeville-like entrance, complete with an ancient Sinatra impersonator and three female backup singers crooning "My Way," should have sent everybody scurrying for the exits

Not so sweet revenge: While sustained action was virtually nonexistent, Hopkins, who scored a unanimous 12-round decision to avenge his 1993 points loss to Jones, delivered most of the scoring blows.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

then and there. But before anybody came to their senses, the bell rang and the fight was on.

Jones' fans wanted him to turn back the hands of time and become the old Roy Jones, instead of an *old* Roy Jones. Hopkins' supporters wanted him to go all Danny Green on Jones and add "The Executioner's" name to the growing list of those who have knocked out the man some believe was the best fighter of his generation.

Neither happened, and now everybody is stuck with the consequences.

◆◆◆

"Richard Schaefer threw me in the same grave as Roy Jones!" Hopkins screamed into the telephone the Wednesday after the fight.

Hopkins is famous for his emotional outbursts and contentious relationships with promoters. But after years of being an outsider, the game's most eloquent maverick seemed to have found a comfortable fit with Golden Boy.

The relationship, which began when Hopkins joined Golden Boy in 2004, worked well when everybody was making money. But even before the Hopkins-Jones stinker, cracks in the façade were beginning to show. The Ornelas and Jones fights were supposed to plaster over them but ultimately only served to expose an even deeper fissure.

Ostensibly, the prick that lanced the festering sore was a statement Schaefer made at the postfight press conference, while Hopkins and Jones were both at the hospital having their assorted medical needs addressed.

"There were a lot of things said by my company that shouldn't have been said," Hopkins continued, his voice lowering to a mere shout. "My wife asked me why would Richard Schaefer say he needs to talk to me about retirement when he saw that I got hit in the back of the head."

"I did not say that it is time for Bernard to hang up his gloves," replied Schaefer when THE RING contacted him to respond. "I said that we should carefully evaluate the doctor's report and then make a decision. And that decision has to come from Bernard. If he feels it is not the time to hang them up, so be it. And we are behind him if that is his decision."

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Doctor William Berliner examines Hopkins after he was hit in the back of the head in the sixth round. Hopkins claimed he never fully recovered from the rabbit punch and continued to fight on "instinct and heart."

To Hopkins' way of thinking, however, Schaefer's words confirm his worse suspicions.

"This is all a plan. It's about the company first," he claimed. "The problem is that I'm still fighting and that's a problem in this relationship. Golden Boy isn't making money with me anymore, not like they can make with the younger kids. And when they can't make money off you in this business, you know where you're headed. I feel that both Golden Boy and HBO want to get me out of the way."

As one would anticipate, Schaefer was quick to deny any conspiracy to kick B-Hop to the curb.

"I can't speak for HBO, but nobody at HBO ever told me that Hopkins should retire," said Schaefer. "Not once have I heard a comment like that, and the same thing with Golden Boy."

While one could be excused for brushing aside Hopkins' accusations as so many sour grapes from a fading star that can't come to grips with the situation

A Spotty Affair

"The Rivals: Hopkins-Jones II" can be divided into two totally diverse parts: thirty seconds of wild excitement and everything else. The "everything else" was painful to watch, so let's put it aside for the time being and examine what happened during the memorable sixth round of an otherwise highly forgettable fight.

Toward the end of another ugly, mauling round, Hopkins ducked low in close, and Jones let him have it with a flagrant rabbit punch. It wasn't one of those clubbing rabbit punches you see fighters give one another in the clinches. It was a hard blow delivered with everything Jones could muster behind it.

Hopkins collapsed on the canvas, where he grabbed the back of his neck and rolled around in apparent pain. Referee Tony Weeks called time out for Hopkins to recuperate and sent Jones to a neutral corner.

"I was dazed when I went down and I was seeing spots when I got up," said Hopkins. "When I told the doctor, he said, 'What color are the spots?' and I told him white. 'Good,' he said. 'Because if it was black spots it would mean you've had a concussion.' The referee asked me if I could continue. I said, 'Yes, just give me a few minutes to get myself together.' I could have taken the easy way out, but that's not me."

Some in the crowd thought Hopkins was milking it, a perception encouraged by Jones when he walked over to the side on the ring where the TV broadcasters were sitting and yelled, "He's tired." But after Weeks penalized Jones a point and ordered them to box on, Hopkins bum rushed Roy into a corner and unleashed his best volley of the fight.

Jones took some flush shots, wavered a bit, and fired back. Lost in the din of the suddenly energized audience, the bell rang just as things were getting good. A member of Jones' camp jumped into the ring, and Weeks wedged himself between the flailing combatants.

"I didn't hear the damn bell," said Hopkins. "When the referee grabbed him, I thought the fight was being stopped. I said to myself, *thank God* because I didn't know if I was going to make it. I was trying to get him out of there. I hadn't fought like that in a long time, and I admit that. I was the old Bernard Hopkins at the Blue Horizon for about 10 seconds."

Unfortunately, that version of Hopkins disappeared as quickly as it materialized. According to Hopkins, he never fully recovered from the shot to the base of his neck.

"On my daughter—and I know I shouldn't say that—from the sixth round to the 12th, I was fighting on instinct and heart," maintained Hopkins. "I was seeing spots and the floor was moving underneath me. Naazim [Richardson, Hopkins' trainer] said, 'You've got to push through this, Bernard. You've waited too long for this.'"

And push through he did, although Jones, 54-7 (40), never did much to discourage him.

he finds himself in, his rant is not entirely without merit.

"They've forgotten the past and turned this thing into a forest fire," said Hopkins, picking up steam again. "I beat Kelly Pavlik, the great white hope, in an historical performance, and Golden Boy can't promote me after that! It was the same thing when I beat Tito Trinidad. I do something I wasn't supposed to do and they sit me down. This isn't a coincidence. I beat Kelly Pavlik and HBO sat me down for 15 months with the help of my company. Yes, with the help of my company."

"I don't know why he would say that," said Schaefer. "HBO didn't want to pay a license fee for the Jones fight. They were interested in a Hopkins fight, but it had to be against Chad Dawson. It's HBO's money and they can do what they want to do with it. Golden Boy cannot force HBO do this or that. We might not like it; we might be pissed off, but at the end of the day, it's their money."

Yes, it's about money. It always is. But don't forget that Hopkins is an inordinately

PHOTO BY MARK RALSTON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

As the old saying goes: He who feels it knows it. But cynics believe that Hopkins hammed it up to a degree following Jones' rabbit punch. Hopkins also went down in the eighth and 10th rounds following additional fouls, but Jones was only penalized one point.

PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The ref protects Jones from B-Hop's post-foul assault

The first five rounds featured more feinting than fighting, a game of ring-around-the-rosy with boxing gloves on. Hopkins threw a few flurries every round, enough to win the session. Jones, cut over his right eye by an accidental headbutt in the second, was quick to grab and hold, one of B-Hop's old tricks thrown back at him by his safety-conscious dance partner.

The last six rounds were not unlike the first half-dozen, except that Hopkins, 51-5-1 (32) and 1 no-contest, went down twice more on fouls, again in the eighth (another rabbit punch) and a third time in the 10th (low blow).

Neither fighter took many chances, but despite his visits to the canvas, Hopkins, 175, controlled the action (such as it was), remained the busier of the two, and won the unanimous decision by scores of 118-109 and 117-110 (twice) rendered by Dave Moretti, Don Trella, and Glenn Trowbridge, respectively. THE RING also scored it for Hopkins, 119-109.

—N. C.

Jones' Last Fight?

The fact that an almost totally shot Roy Jones was able to go 12, bruising rounds with Bernard Hopkins might say more about Hopkins than it does Jones. But darn near anything would have been better than the embarrassing first-round TKO Roy suffered against Danny Green in his previous fight. At least this time, he was still on his feet at the final bell.

Jones hasn't made a final decision about his future as of press time, but he sure sounded like he was seriously considering retirement.

"I'm going to go home and talk to the team, and if they decide to call it a day, we'll call it a day," he said. "But it's not my decision. I'll talk to my coaches."

Unlike rival Hopkins, Jones seems ready to walk away, happy with what he's already accomplished.

"I've had a wonderful career," he said. "You can't have too much better than what I had."

Nobody is going to argue with that evaluation, and while his financial situation could overcome common sense, one can't help but hope Roy isn't forced to suffer any more humiliating losses just to pay the bills. He deserves better.

—N.C.

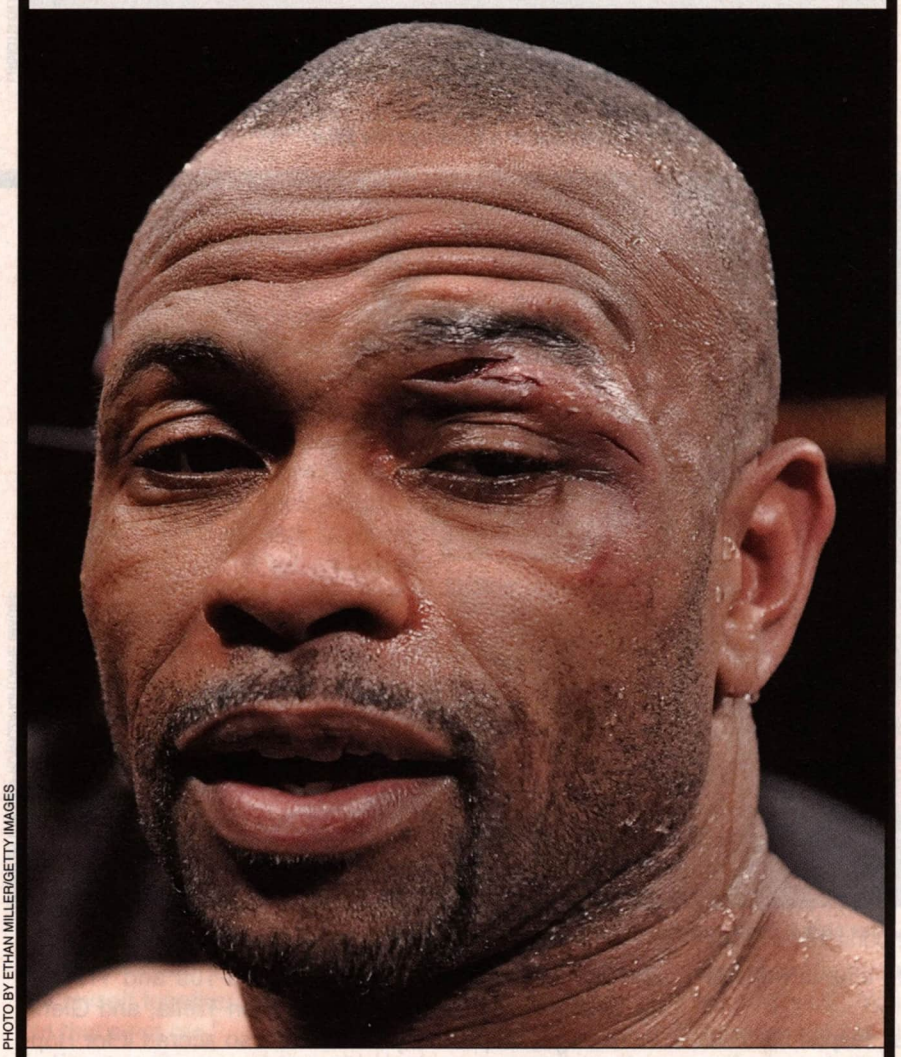

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Jones looks ready for retirement

proud and accomplished fighter. The big sendoff that he's long maintained HBO promised him also means a lot to him.

"Richard told me HBO wanted to send me off with dignity and respect. I said, 'No problem.' If they had kept their word, you would have never seen the Ornelas fight. You would have never seen the Roy Jones fight. In my opinion, there never was a deal."

Hopkins is still looking for that dignified sendoff, and nobody who saw the Jones fiasco could possibly think there was anything remotely dignified about it. Barring something unforeseen, we haven't seen the last of the ornery living legend in the ring.

But it sure doesn't sound like Hopkins will be going out in a blaze of glory against Haye, who used John Ruiz as his personal yo-yo in front of 20,000 fans in Manchester, England, the same night Hopkins bested Jones in Vegas.

"Bernard Hopkins is one of my idols," said Haye after his four-knockdown, ninth-round TKO of Ruiz. "Looking back at his fights over the last 20, 25 years, he's always been a great fighter. But now he's 45 years of age. He fought another 40-year-old on the same night as me, and it was a dire fight for everybody there in attendance. I think he just wants a big payday. To fight for the heavyweight championship of the world, he can demand big money."

Although Hopkins might have to adjust his sights, there are still viable fights out there, even if he has to part with Golden Boy to take advantage of them. Don King wants him to fight Tavoris Cloud. And old foe Joe Calzaghe told Hopkins he was considering a comeback and that if Hopkins beat Jones, he wanted to fight him again. Lucian Bute has also been mentioned. And you never know: The door might still be open to a Dawson fight if "Bad Chad" gets past Jean Pascal in August.

What we are witnessing is the very public death throes of a great fighter's career. Anybody who thinks Hopkins is not going to fight this final battle with all the passion and skills he's employed throughout his Hall of Fame career is delusional. And who knows? Maybe he'll spring a few more surprises before he's dragged, screaming and kicking, to Canastota. ■

POR LOS QUE SE ATREVEN A SUBIR AL RING

CON CARÁCTER

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DAVID HAYE THREATENS THE KLITSCHKOS' DOMINATION

By Brian Doogan

Provocatively, sweating profusely and very purposefully, Wladimir Klitschko stared into the camera lens to deliver his message. "I'm Wladimir Klitschko," he began, "and I want to send this message to boxing fans around the world and, directly, to David Haye. David, you've bitched out on fighting both Klitschko brothers twice already and now is the time to make it happen. So, on behalf of the boxing fans around the world, I am officially calling you out to fight me. David, you can't run away from me forever and you need to follow through with this fight if you want to get respect. I'm ready. What are you waiting for?"

Nine days after his ninth-round stoppage win over perennial contender and two-time heavyweight titleholder John Ruiz in Manchester, England, Haye's candidacy for a world heavyweight title challenge had received the only endorsement that matters.

If the world heavyweight champion was acknowledging that Haye's status is superior to any of his rivals among today's contenders, he was only echoing the prevailing sentiment within boxing. Klitschko needs Haye, and heavyweight boxing, in particular, needs Haye to deliver, if only to draw Klitschko out of a comfort zone that is as seemingly impregnable as the Iron Curtain was in the days before *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Speed and power are the 29-year-old Londoner's most striking qualities, his sleight of hand comparable perhaps with the young, marauding Mike Tyson. He is the heavyweight with "the X factor" and a standout personality in a domain defined increasingly by dull and mediocre challengers and predictable and monotonous matchups.

Klitschko recognizes Haye's worth, despite his feelings of repulsion towards the crude campaign that the Englishman mounted to secure a title challenge in June 2009 (brandishing mock pictures of the Klitschko brothers' severed heads) and his lingering resentment of the manner in which Haye pulled out just two weeks before they were due to step into the ring at the Veltins Arena in

PHOTO BY MICHAEL STEELE/GETTY IMAGES

Gelsenkirchen, Germany. No other heavyweight can generate the same kind of chemistry or credibility. Haye brings hope when before there was only desolation and the most moribund collection of contenders since Joe Louis' "Bum Of The Month" club. It fell to Billy Conn, "The Pittsburgh Kid" to step up and subject Louis' resolve and pedigree to the sternest test in a brilliant, back-and-forth battle at New York's Polo Grounds in the summer of 1941. It is Haye's responsibility now to take Klitschko to a similar place, for no other challenger on the horizon can be said to have this capability. Such is Wladimir's level of dominance.

And just like the Pittsburgh Kid ("I tried to knock him out—otherwise I'd have won easy," Billy reflected ruefully after being brutally stopped by Louis in the 13th round when he was ahead on points), Haye is flawed. "I'm nowhere near the finished article. I've got a long way to go, but I'm getting there. I'm on the right road," he insisted after repelling Ruiz in his first defense of the WBA heavyweight title, which he won against Nicolay Valuev in December 2009. "I can work on my defense, my punch output, all aspects of my game."

He will need to, for Wladimir and Vitali Klitschko are in a different league than the unjustly maligned Ruiz. The Chelsea, Massachusetts, native's virtues are rooted in his stoicism and resilience. Throughout his career he has managed somehow to make more talented performers fight at his less refined and less exciting level. At 38 years old, however, the resistance was just not there against a puncher of Haye's quality and the first Latino boxer ever to win a heavyweight title succumbed in the ninth round at the MEN Arena. Almost immediately, the talk was of how Haye might handle the Klitschkos.

"David Haye and his business partner, Adam Booth, will this week begin negotiations for the biggest fight in British boxing history, in front of 80,000 people at Wembley Stadium in the autumn against Wladimir Klitschko," reported Kevin Mitchell in *The Guardian*. "It could be worth more than £10-million [$13-million] to each fighter."

PHOTO BY WILLIAM SHERATT/HOGANPHOTOS/GBP

Haye landed repeatedly with his powerful right hand and feels that the same punches that floored Ruiz would do likewise to either of the Klitschko brothers. Hopefully, fans will get to find out before the year is over.

Suggested Jeff Powell in the *Daily Mail*: "The Londoner's exceptional quickness of hand, foot, and body movement is spectacular and that speed generates the punching power to disturb the vertical hold of bigger opponents."

In the *News of the World*, Steve Lillis thundered: "Brotherly love is lost on Wladimir Klitschko when it comes to David Haye. The Ukrainian powerhouse, 34, revealed he and older brother Vitali are warring over who boxes the trash-talking Londoner. 'We both want to beat him up,' said Wladimir. "Vitali says 'I want to take him,' and I say, 'I want him.' We fight all the time over who will beat him up.'"

So which Klitschko would Haye most like to meet? "Wladimir is the more natural athlete of the two brothers

Haye heads to a neutral corner as referee Guillermo Perez Pineda begins to count over Ruiz. Haye floored the former WBA heavyweight titleholder four times before the fight was stopped in the ninth round.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL STEELE/GETTY IMAGES

and he would win a 100-meter race, for example, between the two of them because he's faster. But Vitali is the tougher fighter and he's proved this over the years," Haye declared. "I just think that, at 38 years old, he's slowing down and this was evident to me in the first couple of rounds he fought against Juan Carlos Gomez when the Cuban's speed gave him problems. Wladimir has a lot more hand speed and his defense is better but, like I've said before, he's very gun shy and he's developed a strategy where he tries to stay out of trouble. Vitali is not afraid to take two punches in order to hit his opponent with one. Both these guys are dangerous—I wouldn't try to fool you otherwise—but I can outwit and outwork them, I firmly believe. I'm ready to fight either guy and give the heavyweight division what it needs—excitement, a surge of electricity, a breath of fresh air, and I bring all of these things."

This he does, but his own vulnerability is what will bring the Klitschkos racing to the negotiating table, breathless over who can breakfast on him first. Imagine what Vitali must have thought when he watched Ruiz take two counts in the first round, only to shake up Haye with a right cross to the jaw before the bell intervened, the same Vitali who went toe-to-toe with Lennox Lewis and refused to fall. Haye might be right when he speculates that the 38-year-old Vitali is a slower, even more mechanical version. But the former world champion's ability to absorb a punch and mete out the kind of retribution which has brought about 37 knockouts in his 39 wins and two defeats is ominous, especially when you consider how Lolenga Mock, a *super middleweight*, had Haye in all sorts of trouble in their brief encounter in 2003 and how another veteran, Carl Thompson, stopped him a year later.

Haye is a much improved and much more dangerous fighter today, but suspicions remain about his susceptibility to a proper punch on the chin, the kind of destructive left hook, for instance, with which Wladimir terminated his most recent bout against Eddie Chambers. And how might Haye weave a path past the thudding left jab of the younger Klitschko in order to fire the kind of quick, powerful punches that so depleted and brutalized Ruiz?

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"Listen, I'm not too fazed by what the Klitschkos have done against other opponents," Haye countered with typical bravado. "Look at each of their most recent opponents. Eddie Chambers was in dreadful shape and so was Cris Arreola. They were both a disgrace to boxing. If I hit the Klitschkos with the same shots I hit John Ruiz with, they'll go over and that's the truth."

Ruiz was more dogged, tough, and dangerous even than Chambers and Arreola combined. His ability to absorb punishment until his opponent reaches his own breaking point threatened briefly to plunge Haye into turmoil. But the booming right hand to the jaw with which Haye felled Ruiz inside the opening 30 seconds of the fight and the follow-up salvo that put him down again—inexplicably, Panamanian referee Guillermo Perez Pineda issued the mandatory eight-count for a knockdown and then signaled a one-point penalty to Haye for having hit Ruiz on the back of the head—had a debilitating effect on the game visitor. Even so, he fought back strongly, landing a right hand, which propelled Haye into the ropes, and he even won the second round as the Englishman's work became surprisingly slovenly.

"Overall, I would say that my performance wasn't that great," Haye said. "It was entertaining and good for the crowd but, technically, it wasn't as good as I would have liked because I was taking way too many shots. I was getting some good work done in sparring with BJ Flores but, unfortunately, he hit me with a good left hand and cut my eye and I wasn't able to spar after that, more than a month before the fight. But I had the belief that even without sparring I was way better than John Ruiz. Ultimately, that proved to be the case, but the more of these tough fights I experience, the better I'll become. As I said, I'm nowhere near the complete article yet, but I'm on the right road."

Further knockdowns in the fifth and sixth rounds left Ruiz' corner contemplating a compassionate act by hauling their man out of the firing line,

PHOTO BY WILLIAM SHERATT/HOGANPHOTOS/GBP

The TKO of Ruiz was Haye's first defense of the WBA strap he won by beating Nicolay Valuev. The promotion was a big success, as a capacity crowd of 20,000 fans filled the MEN Arena in Manchester, England.

PHOTO BY CLEMENS BILAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Who will be first? Both Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko want to fight Haye, and either match would be huge in Europe. But if Haye wants to be "world champion," he'll have to beat Wladimir, who holds THE RING belt.

but he asked for another round and gave as good as he got in the seventh before Haye's unrelenting assault prompted referee Pineda's intervention at 2:01 of the ninth after Ruiz' trainer, Miguel Diaz, had thrown in the towel, his charge's deteriorating state blatantly apparent to each of the 20,000 people in the arena.

"I told everyone it would go to the later rounds, and it did because he can take big shots. And I take my hat off to him," Haye acknowledged. "Even when he's been wobbled, he's still there, throwing punches back. It was a tough, grueling fight, but I felt in control the whole way. His corner showed compassion and did the right thing."

Some of Haye's punching and the effects of those punches would have been perfect fodder for an HBO highlights reel, but the big money in heavyweight boxing is no longer in the United States. A bid from Dubai may lure Haye and the younger Klitschko to the Middle East for their anticipated rendezvous and *The Guardian's* Mitchell, for one, is convinced of Haye's ability to upset the giant Ukrainians.

"Haye was terrific against Ruiz, not perfect, but electrifying," Mitchell wrote. "He is creating the sort of excitement Nigel Benn did, a charismatic big hitter with a slightly unreliable chin who loves to entertain. What more could fight fans in this country ask for: a British world heavyweight champion who throws bombs and only just gets out of the way of the return traffic – but not always. His trainer, Adam Booth, said afterwards, 'I'm always unhappy with him when he gets hit. We knew that was down to lack of sparring. The only way to work on your defense is to have people punching at you. So we just worked on his punch conditioning, so he could work hard for 12 rounds. This will make him a better fighter, because he had to come through some rough times.'

"Haye got cut in sparring 4½ weeks before the fight, yet was still confident enough in his own talent to go through with the Ruiz fight. It's that sort of arrogance champions are made of. Haye looks increasingly comfortable in that role. He knows he is 'the man.' He knows the Klitschkos have nowhere else to go. To get these fights for Haye, Booth will have to work on the Klitschkos' sense of honor because they are both proud men. He could do worse than quote them an old Russian saying that is familiar to these sons of a former Soviet air force colonel: 'It is a bad soldier who does not dream to be a general.' The Klitschkos are good soldiers. Some of their recent opponents, though, have been no more than cardboard targets on a firing range."

At the very least, Haye will fire back, for the heavyweight with "the X factor," gunning for the very top. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

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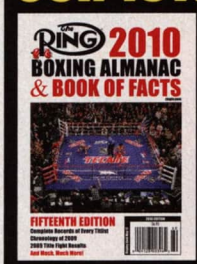

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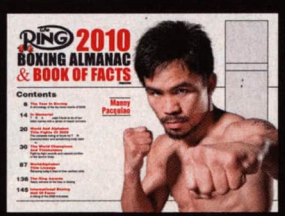

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CHAMPION MARTINEZ

Nobody's Pushing Him Around Anymore

By Joseph Santoliquito

The story begins on the dusty, desolate streets of Quilmes, Argentina, 23 miles south of Buenos Aires, just beyond the train tracks on the east side of town. It's where they'd always wait for the boy with the pretty face. He was the neighborhood toughs' favorite target, a comic-relief victim that they tormented on a regular basis.

The boy never bothered anyone. In many ways, he was just like them, living in a one-bedroom, cinderblock hut with a metal corrugated roof, just another victim of poverty trying to survive. He usually tagged along with his father on his various welding jobs or played soccer with his two brothers.

But for some sick reason, the gun-wielding group loved to pick on him. They liked circling him and shooting at his feet, bullets spitting up dirt, making him dance like some poor schlep in an old black-and-white cowboy movie. "*Dance, Sergio, dance,*" they'd all scream, bent over laughing, patting each other on the back. After they had their fill of yuks, they'd move on.

Sure, Sergio Martinez felt a little humiliated, a little scared, each time he was shot at for laughs. But he also possessed something the thugs couldn't see and probably wouldn't even understand—a burning vision of something better beyond the rugged zone of Quilmes. He dreamed of playing football for Quilmes Atlético Club and Club Atlético Argentino de Quilmes, the local pro soccer teams. He dreamed of being successful enough to climb out of the villas miseria (slums) and buy nice homes for his mother and brothers.

Boxing, the vehicle that would help him realize his dreams, came later, much later. Martinez was already 20 when he walked into a local gym and took up the sport that would make him famous.

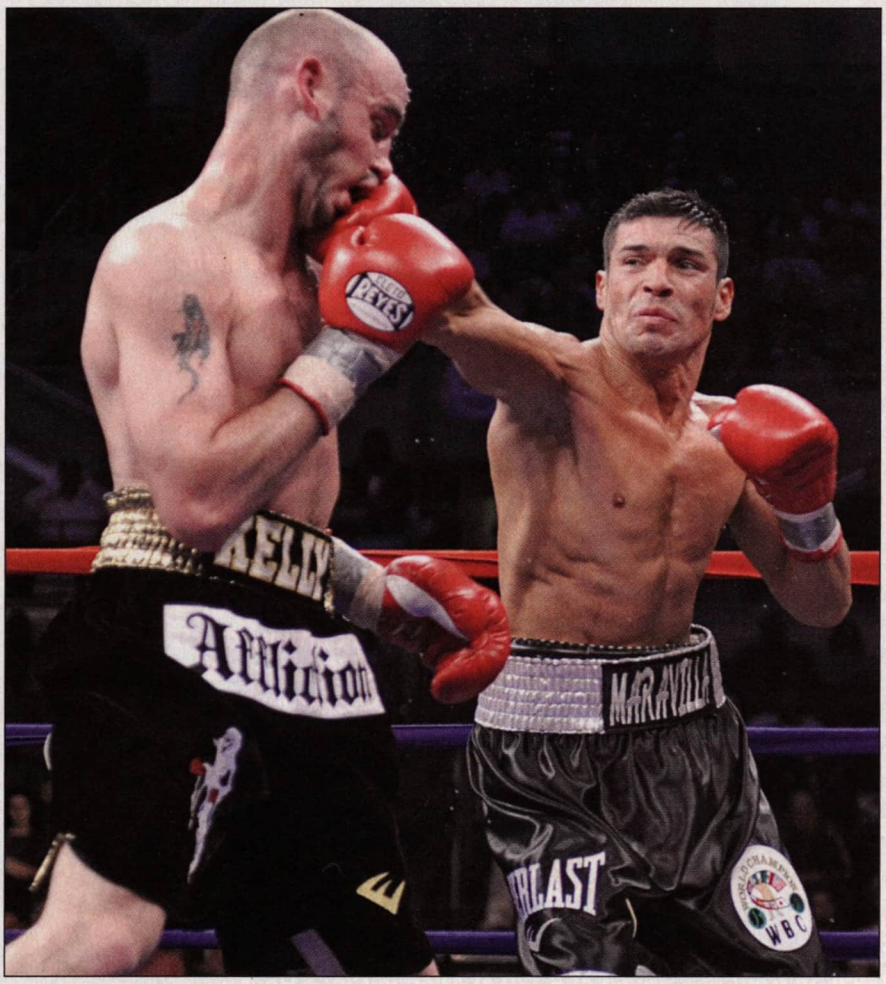
After a long and arduous struggle, Martinez, 45-2-2 (24), catapulted himself into Argentine boxing lore on April 17, when he tore apart Kelly Pavlik, 36-2 (32), in front of a crowd of 6,179 at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall to win The Ring's middleweight world championship, handing Pavlik his first defeat as a middleweight.

Martinez' victory was the culmination of a long, winding geographical journey that started in Quilmes and eventually came to rest in Oxnard, California, where he's settled and lived the last three years. In between, there was a lengthy stopover in Spain and fights in England and Ireland. For a time, "El Maravilla" seemed to be a fighter without a country, a promoter, or a future. Now he's world middleweight champion, a distinction he shares with past Argentine great, Carlos Monzon.

"No one wanted me, they all thought I was too old," said the 35-year-old Martinez, through interpreter Cicilio Flores, the fighter's strength and conditioning coach. "I just wanted a chance to fight and to prove myself. I kept asking myself: *Is there something wrong with me; was I lacking a certain skill?* All I needed was a door, a chance to prove what I could do. It's perseverance, I guess, that got me to this point. It's what kept me moving forward. It's been that way my whole career, my whole life."

Martinez' life started as the middle son of three boys born to Hugo Alberto Martinez and Susanna Griselda Paniagua. Mom was a caregiver, staying at home with the boys while Hugo went out and found odd jobs, mostly metal work. The family slept in one room, the boys nudging their way for space in what Sergio described as an extended crib.

They survived on what they had, but it wasn't always enough. For example, they pirated electricity to keep the lights on. Hugo used to go to work at five every morning and not arrive back home until around 10 at night, doing everything from repairing homes to welding and replacing pipes and fixing roofs. He'd arrive sweaty and tired with around $15 in his pocket after a 16-hour day.



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Martinez' slick movement and accurate southpaw jabs enabled him to get off to a quick start against the slower but heavier hitting Pavlik. The new middleweight champion considers athleticism and intelligence his two biggest assets. Both were on display against Pavlik.

"Oh, I had it bad, real bad," Sergio remembered. "It's kind of funny now, because people see me and think I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth. Not me. I started working to help my family when I was 13 and I quit school to work with my father full-time when I was 14. We survived day-to-day. Some days we didn't know what we'd be eating that night. But that wasn't the bad part."

The bad part was walking the streets of Eastern Quilmes, where Martinez was regularly roughed up. The young Martinez had two problems: movie star looks and a reluctance to be a street fighter in testosterone-charged Quilmes.

"I would get jumped and robbed all of the time," Martinez recalled. "Anything I had got taken away from me. I learned not to wear anything expensive. But whatever I had, the tougher kids would pick on me and steal. I was never a street fighter, because a lot of guys in my neighborhood would carry guns and knives. I would talk myself out of those situations most of the time.

"Sometimes, I would fight back. But I had to pick my spots. It wasn't always smart to fight back. If you did and someone had a gun, you'd wind up dead over something stupid. A lot of the times I had guns and knives pulled on me, and it would scare me to death. I can't forget the times these jerks would wait for me and surround me. Then they'd shoot at my feet and make me dance, so they could laugh at me. I was a kid, maybe 13, 14 years old. I never bothered anyone. It's why it makes me laugh that people see my face and think I had it nice.

"But after what I've been through and what I saw, it made me fearless. Do you think I'd be afraid of Paul Williams, Kermit Cintron, or Kelly Pavlik after having a knife or a gun pointed in my face? I remember, oh, I remember. I can't forget."

That physical and mental foundation that eventually carried Martinez to a world boxing championship was forged lugging heavy welding tools on his shoulders to work on rooftops in 90-plus degree heat for 15 hours—at $5 a day. It carved his athletic body and it also embedded an undying determination.

It was the fortitude forged in those early years that kept Martinez going even

when things went badly. In February 2000, he was much too inexperienced to be thrown in against the more-seasoned Antonio Margarito. Consequently, Martinez was stopped for the only time in his career, via seventh-round TKO.

He experienced two major disappointments last year. First, was a draw with Cintron, which the vast majority of observers thought Martinez deserved to win. What happened in the seventh was particularly galling. As the round drew to a close, Martinez tagged Cintron with a hard left hook to the head. Cintron wobbled into the ropes and then took a knee, all the while protesting he had been butted.

Referee Frank Santore Jr. hadn't seen a headbutt (because there wasn't one) and kept counting. Cintron appeared to lift his knee off the canvas just before the ref reached 10, at which point Santore made a vague hand gesture that made it appear that the fight was over. But as Cintron and his corner continued to complain, Santore backpedaled, claiming that he hadn't heard the bell and that Citron had risen at nine.

Following a 2½-minute delay, the fight resumed, and although Cintron landed some big punches over the next three rounds, Martinez outworked him in the 11th and dominated the 12th. Santore's shoddy officiating also played a role in the scoring, when he unnecessarily penalized Martinez a point for hitting the back of Cintron's head, largely the result of Cintron repeatedly ducking low.

The next setback came last December, when Martinez lost a majority decision to Williams in one of the best fights of '09. Martinez nonchalantly shrugged for the HBO cameras after the loss, but behind the scenes, he felt differently.

"You know, I try to keep my cool, to show this easy face," said Martinez, laughing. "I'm someone who always looks towards the future and keeps things positive, but I have to admit, I was a little angry after those two fights last year, maybe just a little angry. I thought I won both of them, and anyone who saw them and who knows boxing could tell you that I won those fights. What kept me going was this idea that something good was always going to come to me."

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Pavlik came on strong in the middle rounds and began to punish his challenger with hard shots to the head. A right hand decked an off-balance Martinez in the seventh, but although he admitted later he had been buzzed, the man from Argentina quickly recovered.

It did in the Pavlik-wrapped gift package.

Martinez was seven years older than the 28-year-old Pavlik, four inches shorter, and was giving away 11 pounds on fight night (they both weighed 159½ at the official weigh-in), when Pavlik ballooned to 178 and Martinez re-hydrated to 167.

Martinez' pot shots and movement caused problems for Pavlik, who had a cut opened on the corner of his left eyelid in the first round. Martinez bounced around with his hands down by his side, landing straight lefts and kept Pavlik off balance by circling and controlling the geometry of the ring.

"Technically, Pavlik was easier than I thought he would be, but physically, Pavlik was a beast, very, very strong, a big guy to me, who feels like a piece of iron when you hit him," Martinez said.

By the fifth, Pavlik began finding his range and closing the distance between him and his challenger. He started timing El Maravilla's pivots better, finally catching an off-balance Martinez with a right in the seventh and putting him on the floor for the only knockdown in the fight. It did not, however, seem to affect Martinez, who got up with his arms outstretched, appealing to referee David Fields that it was a slip, not a knockdown. He changed his tune after the fight.

"That was the hardest I got hit all night, the punch on the top of my head that knocked me down," Martinez said. "Other than that, I was okay."

In the ninth, Martinez was rejuvenated. He watched the second Ray Leonard-Roberto Duran fight the night before he fought Pavlik and saw how Leonard dodged around Duran. He also mimicked "Sugar Ray's" attack, showboating at times and even winding up a bolo punch.

"It's all about having fun in the ring," Martinez said. "I use my athleticism and intelligence to win. Those last four rounds were when I got my second wind and became Superman."

After eight rounds, the fight was arguably even. According to CompuBox, Pavlik had landed 113 of 242 punches, while Martinez had connected on 118 of 373. Then, about 30 seconds into the ninth, Martinez lunged in with a straight left that opened a cut on Pavlik's right eyelid. The blood began to

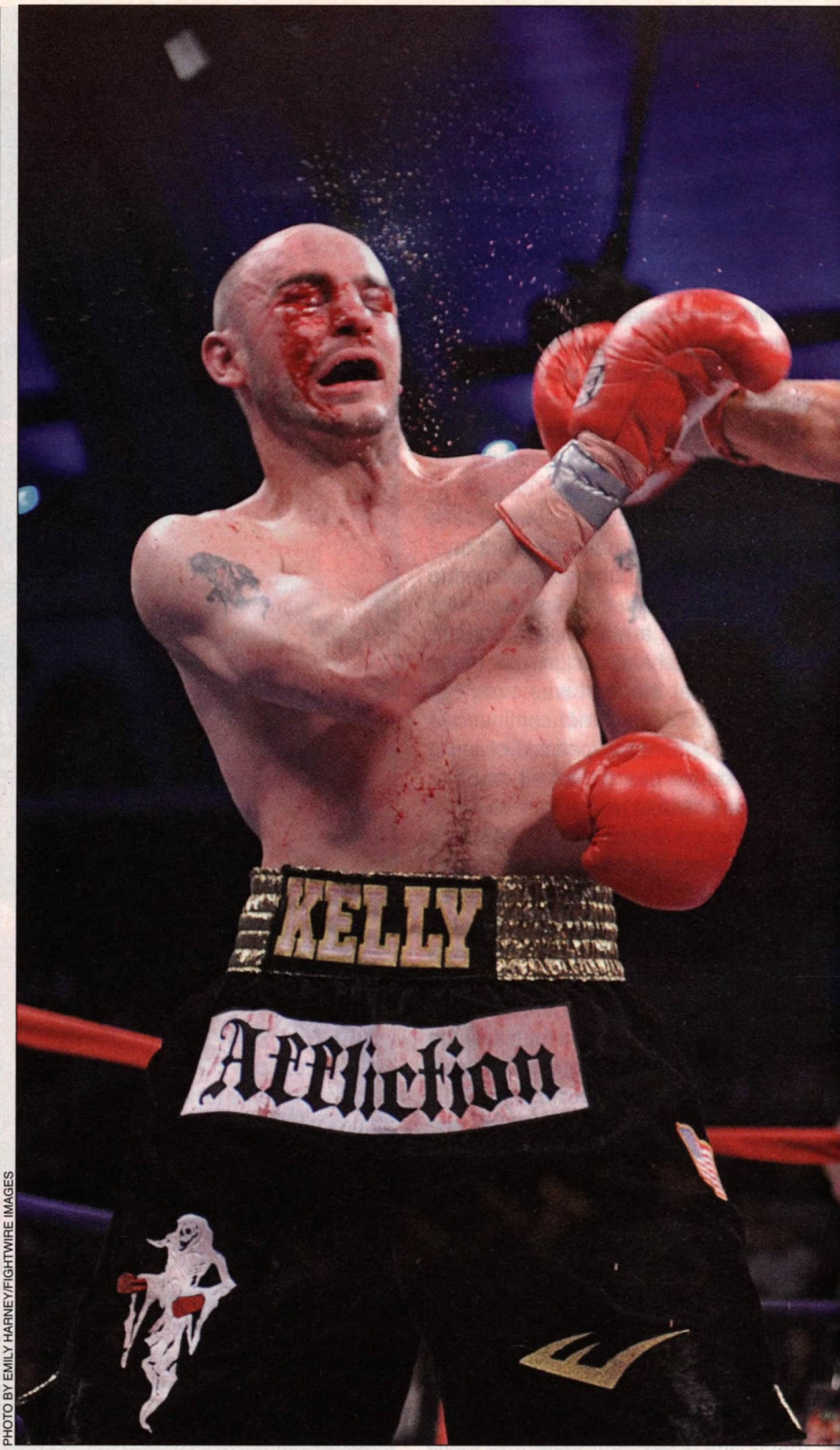

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

spill down into the defending champ's eye and onto his cheek. It was Martinez' signal to shift into another gear and he was in total control from then until the final bell.

"I knew I had to finish strong and I knew what happened to me against Cintron and Williams. I didn't want a repeat of that," Martinez said.

There was little the tiring Pavlik could do except suck it up and try to last the distance, as Martinez landed 112 punches the final four rounds, compared to 51 for Pavlik.

Martinez changed the course of the fight in the ninth round when he cut Pavlik over the right eye with a left hand. The cut hampered Pavlik's vision and helped Martinez dominate the action from then until the final bell.

"In the last third of the fight, around the eighth or ninth round, he began touching me a lot," said Pavlik, who did not attend the postfight news conference because he was at the hospital getting stitched up. "I couldn't see out of my right eye after he cut it in the eighth or the ninth. I couldn't see his left. I wasn't hurt, but he just hit me with a good volume of punches."

Enough punches, apparently, to prevent another scoring travesty. Judges Roberto Ramirez (115-112), Barbara Perez (116-111), and Craig Metcalfe

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Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, The Ring's senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

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(115-111) all scored it in Martinez' favor. THE RING also scored it 115-112 for the new champion.

Because of the connection with the great Monzon, Martinez calls the middleweight world title "the queen" of championships in Argentina. His hope is that he can reconnect with his native country, which he left eight years ago to live and fight in Spain. That's *his hope*. Reality, Martinez feels, could be slightly different.

"I hope that Argentina will receive me with open arms," said the South American country's first middleweight world champion since Hugo Corro lost to Vito Antuofermo in 1979. "I was two years old when Monzon stopped boxing. He's an idol in Argentina. Now I'm here. Unfortunately, in Argentina, I will always be below Monzon.

"They accept a different type of fighter than me. I'm not really flashy and you have to almost be a son of a bitch to be accepted in Argentina. I'm not like that. That's okay with me, if they don't see me like that. I have fans throughout the world. It's like Argentina turned their backs on me. They feel I turned my back on them. But if I played their politics, none of this would have happened. I would not be world champion."

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

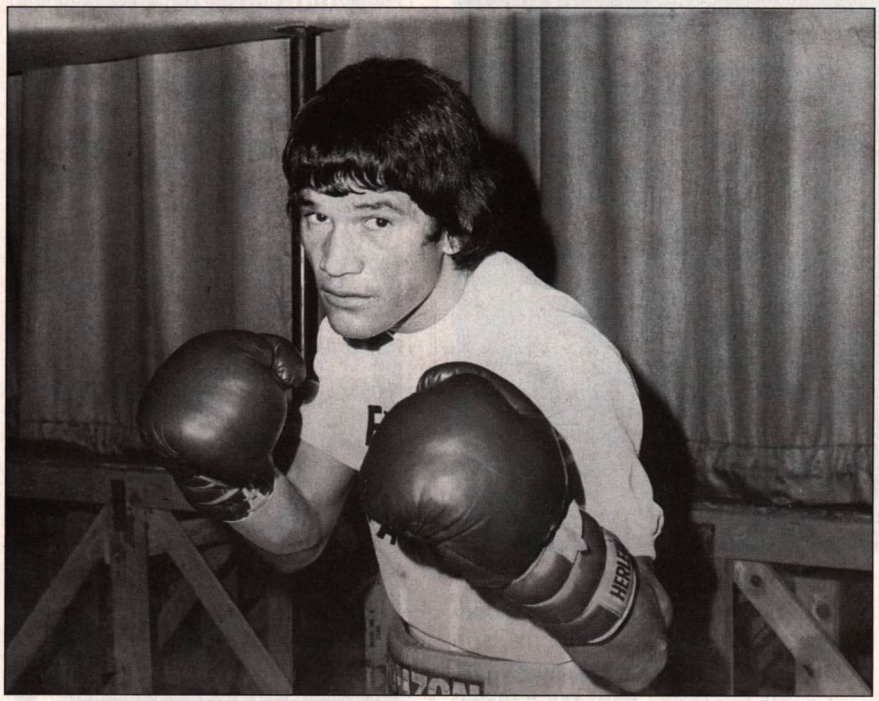
After years of struggle and bad luck, Martinez finally made it to the top at age 35. Although he is THE RING world middleweight champion, he is also the number-one contender for the vacant junior middleweight title and could possibly become a double champion.

Martinez is going to take some downtime and aim toward fighting again in August. Pavlik has a rematch clause, but might not want any part of Martinez again at 160. Moreover, if Martinez' promoter Lou DiBella has his way, Martinez is going to defend his WBC junior middleweight trinket and then think about rematches with Pavlik or Williams at 160.

"We feel Sergio is strongest at 154," DiBella said. "I'll tell you this, we're not going back-to-back-to-back against guys that big, like Williams, Pavlik, and back to Williams again. Sergio wants to campaign at 154. Don't rule out the possibility of fighting Margarito at 154. I know for a fact Sergio doesn't like Margarito's cheating. That loss to Margarito years ago has always stuck in his crawl. He wasn't anywhere near the fighter then that he is now."

Martinez, however, will always carry his past with him. His cumulative life experiences have made him who he is today—a world champion who knows where he's come from and how it molded the man he's become.

"I've been bullied and pushed around my whole life," Martinez said. "Now because of what I've done, I'm able to buy my mother and brothers new homes. I can get them out of the ghetto where we lived. You always hope for happy endings." ■



Comparisons between Martinez and Carlos Monzon are inevitable, but Martinez believes that the people of his native Argentina will never embrace him the same way they embraced Monzon. Part of that stems from the fact that Martinez left Argentina to further his career, but his clean-cut persona could also be a problem.

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SEEING DIRRELL IN A NEW LIGHT

"The Matrix" Shakes Up The "Super Six"

By Paul Salgado

It took a single punch to erase Arthur Abraham's cloak of invincibility and tarnish the reputation he had built over a 31-fight unbeaten streak. For the first time in his career, the Armenian-born, German-based Abraham was finding himself comprehensively outboxed by American Andre "The Matrix" Dirrell in their Showtime "Super Six World Boxing Classic" fight. When Dirrell slipped on a water-soaked logo, a frustrated Abraham demonstrated a lapse in judgment—the sort that proud fighters sometimes exhibit when they cannot reconcile an impending loss—and struck his opponent when he was down and defenseless.

The punch, which left Dirrell briefly unconscious on the mat before being declared the winner by disqualification at the 1:13 mark of the 11th round, served to turn the fortunes of both fighters in ways previously unforeseen. But that is what has made the Super Six tournament so intriguing: The fights themselves may not always be compelling, but the matchups certainly are. So, too, are the continual twists in the storyline. The formula has worked so well, one has to wonder if a new template for boxing is unfolding.

"I would love to see it, but I would not be too quick to say 'yes' for a number of reasons," said Showtime analyst Steve Farhood. "One, is that it's hard to get a bunch of promoters together and agree on anything, the size of the ring, the color of the trunks, much less a tournament like this. Two, this is a very balanced field. There was no superstar going in. And if you get a division where one fighter is clearly the best, he is not likely to want to engage in a tournament like this. So a lot has to be right for something like this to happen. But the fact that this tournament is working, and garnering a lot of attention is positive for divisions like, say, the junior welterweights, which has a lot of good young fighters."

Ironically, Abraham, who earned three points knocking out Jermain Taylor in Stage One, is still a solid bet to make it to the semifinal round, but his decisive loss to Dirrell will now likely diminish his standing as a favorite to win the tournament.

Meanwhile, within two bouts, Dirrell, a 2004 Olympic bronze medalist, has morphed his style from the lightening quick but safety-first runner witnessed against Froch to the consummate boxer with authoritative power seen against Abraham. The transition not only garnered him two points, it now made him a live challenge in Stage Three against his friend and gold-medal-winning Olympic teammate, Andre Ward.

"I think it's a great fight," said ESPN.com boxing writer Dan Rafael. "They both know each other from the amateurs, they both won Olympic medals,

PHOTO BY HOWARD SCHATZ/SHOWTIME

and they are both among the top young fighters in boxing. Going back years ago, I was always interested in seeing the Fernando Vargas-David Reid fight. It never happened. Then we saw the Jermain Taylor-Jeff Lacy fight. They were Olympic teammates, but unfortunately that happened too late, when neither guy was at his best. This is going to be one of those fights where both guys are going to be in the prime of their careers."

Right now, even Las Vegas bookmakers agree that it is difficult to pick against Ward, who was recently tabbed as even-money to hold aloft the World Boxing Classic trophy and the best candidate to remain undefeated in all of his bouts. Relatively untested, Ward put on arguably the tournament's most dominant performance in aggressively outboxing Mikkel Kessler, utilizing speed to shut out the Dane over 11 rounds and winning a technical decision. It was a victory that earned the undefeated 26-year-old Oakland, California, native plaudits for being a thinking man's fighter, who imposed his

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

will on Kessler and executed his fight plan with discipline.

Based on the Abraham victory, a similar case can now be made for Dirrell, which makes a Ward matchup even more intriguing. There is little to criticize about Ward, but it remains to be seen how he fares in a close give-and-take struggle, and whether his elusive chin stands up when finally tagged by a top-tier super middleweight. For Dirrell, it's his confidence that still remains a question mark.

Dirrell was surprisingly effective against Arthur Abraham, going to the body and forcing Abraham to lower his high guard. The Olympic bronze medalist made himself a player in the "Super Six" sweepstakes.

PHOTO BY JOHN BOOZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Referee Lawrence Cole tends to Dirrell after Abraham slugged him in the back of the head in the 11th round. Though Cole was out of position to intervene when Abraham struck him, he saw enough to disqualify the Armenian who was believed to be the Super Six favorite.

"He's got all the moves in the book," observed Froch. "But there seems to be an ingredient missing with Dirrell, and that's a set of steely balls. He doesn't seem to have the heart to grit his teeth and stay in there and fight when necessary. Against me, he put some good punches together in round 10, and then he just wanted to run again. He just doesn't want to fight because he doesn't like getting hit."

One guy Dirrell certainly wants to avoid getting hit by is 29-1 (20) power puncher, Allan Green. The Tulsa, Oklahoma, fighter is still smoldering from being left out of the original six, but now replaces Taylor who is poised to retire after crushing back-to-back kayo losses to Froch and Abraham. Now facing the question of whether it is better to be included later than not at all, Green enters the competition having never really been tested against a top-level 168-pounder. His loss to Edison Miranda in 2007 was more a commentary on Green's fortitude, given that he was sick during the bout and had a substantial part of his intestinal tract surgically removed soon after.

Having inherited a one-fight, zero-points deficit from Taylor, the odds certainly seem stacked against Green. His pre-tournament decision over late-substitute Tarvis Simms was more demanding than expected, but Green's 20 knockouts, including his chilling kayo of Jaidon Codrington in '05, are reminders that he carries equalizers in each glove.

"Green has good boxing skills, but his calling card is his power," said Rafael. "He can knock out any one of the other five guys in the tournament. He is an arrogant fighter. By that, I mean he's a very confident guy. He believes he's a great fighter and that he's now been given an opportunity to show it."

One knockout would likely vault Green into the semifinals, but if he manages only a two-point victory against either Ward or Kessler, his late entry could still handicap him. According to the tournament rules, if two fighters tie on points, a head-to-head challenge will be invoked to determine which fighter goes on to the semifinals. This means if the fighters faced off during the group-stage segment, the winner of that bout would move on. If they have never met, then the tiebreaker will be based on total points accumulated by each fighter on the judge's scorecards throughout the group stage segment. For Green, who needs at least one victory to make it to the semis, accumulated rounds are not an insurance he enjoys. He may have

inherited a loss, but he doesn't get Taylor's first-round scores, which means he begins the tournament with zero points.

If Green has a shot at a win, Kessler, whom he faces in Stage Three, would now seem the more vulnerable opponent. But the Dane's bout with Froch (which will have taken place after this issue goes to print) will speak volumes, not only about Green's prospects in the tournament but also where he is in his career. Kessler, 30, hasn't bested any top fighters since Librado Andrade in 2007. But if his record tells us anything, it's that sluggers don't beat him, but high volume boxers like Ward or Joe Calzaghe do.

Unlike Abraham, a cut up Kessler remained a study in sportsmanship and dignity in losing to Ward, despite ample reason to complain about Ward's persistent, if unintended, headbutting. The consensus view is that Ward's brilliant boxing simply shut down Kessler, yet some wonder whether Kessler's inability to pull the trigger at times was clear evidence of a fighter in decline.

"Kessler is a very proud fighter, and he knows he was not only beaten but humiliated by Ward," said Farhood. "My only concern is whether Kessler is physically breaking down. He's had a lot of injuries over the years that make him older than his age. And he didn't look like a very live fighter against Ward."

Froch now has the most seasoned draw in Abraham and Kessler, but working in Froch's favor is that each man will be going into their match with him coming off a conclusive defeat. Of course, each will also be hungering for redemption.

One more victory for Froch should comfortably position him in the semis, but as recent fights with Dirrell and Taylor suggest, any slick, quick-handed fighter he encounters will provide a continued source of frustration.

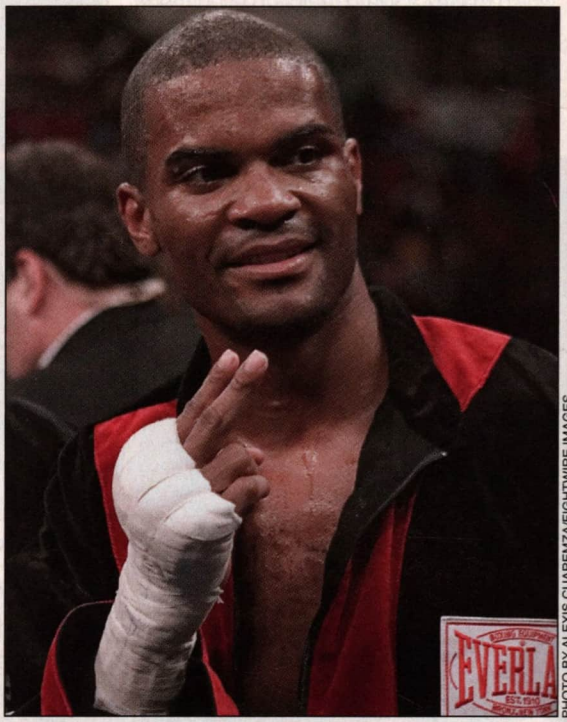

PHOTO BY ALEXIS CUAREMZA/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Dirrell's victory over Abraham could set up a possible Stage Three Super Six showdown with his former 2004 Olympic teammate Andre Ward, who made a point himself by dismantling Mikkel Kessler in Stage One (above). Ward, however, will have to get by late substitute Allan Green (top), the threatening knockout artist who replaces the departed Jermain Taylor.

Having fought both men, Dirrell also sees peril for Froch, whom he refers to as a "brawler with height," in his bout with Abraham.

"Abraham wings punches to get inside, but he has great short punches," noted Dirrell. "He's not afraid to fight on the inside and that is one of Carl's biggest flaws—fighting on the inside—and I wish I would have realized that. If he stays on the inside with Abraham, then Abraham is definitely going to knock him out. But if he puts in high output and keeps Abraham at bay, then he'll beat him. But he can't bang with Abraham. If he does, I guarantee you Froch will see the mat."

A high punch output, combined with accurate punching essentially won the athletically gifted Dirrell, 167½, almost every round against Abraham amid approximately 4,000 Michigan faithful ensconced within the hallowed walls of the Joe Louis Arena in Detroit, Michigan. It was understood that Abraham, 168, would begin slowly, but his well-documented one-punch ability to end a fight late kept the bout with Dirrell captivating despite its one-sidedness. In the opening rounds, as Abraham, 31-1 (20), plodded forward behind his patented high guard, Dirrell stood in the pocket and pierced his defense with sharp combinations, causing the Armenian to welt around the eyes.

From the onset, it was clear Dirrell, 19-1 (13), would fight differently than he did against Froch, when he literally leapt out of harm's way when threatened. Instead, Dirrell unloaded and slid laterally before setting to throw more shots. He also dug vicious hooks to the body with a consistency never before encountered by Abraham, rendering his attack virtually nonexistent until the mid-rounds.

Missing often with counterpunches, Abraham began to look frustrated in the fourth. He chased his opponent to the ropes, but was ultimately stunned to find himself on the canvas for the first time ever, courtesy of a straight left hand that caught him off balance.

By round seven, frustration would turn to desperation. Abraham's right eyebrow was split open by a hook, and then moments later, a clubbing left from Dirrell knocked him headlong into the ropes for what should have been declared a second knockdown by referee Lawrence Cole (USA).

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Carl Froch still has doubts about Dirrell, despite his impressive performance against the previously undefeated Abraham. Froch says Dirrell is still missing something, "a set of steely balls."

Abraham would take round eight, but a similarly bad call by Cole would cost him a knockdown in round 10 after he planted his lead foot behind Dirrell's and fired a solid right that dumped the American on the seat of his trunks.

Despite the two blown knockdowns, Cole swiftly made the right call the moment Dirrell groped his head and fell back on the canvas, summoning the ringside doctors, and then disqualifying Abraham.

Dirrell was taken to Detroit Receiving hospital, where it was determined he suffered a mild concussion but no permanent neural damage.

"It was a devastating punch that caught him right on the chin!" said former light heavyweight champion Antonio Tarver, who was part of Showtime's broadcast team. "I mean, a free right hand by Arthur Abraham. C'mon, that would knock anybody out!"

Abraham's foul may be the latest intrigue in the tournament, but it certainly won't be the last. It remains to be seen, for instance, whether a home-field advantage remains a part of the dominating trend for winning fighters or whether youth ultimately triumphs over experience. Some will simply want to know whether it will be America or Europe that earns ultimate bragging rights.

Whatever the answers to these questions, the Super Six World Boxing Classic, so far at least, has done a splendid job of entertaining us with unexpected results and fascinating turns of events. ■

Paul Salgado, THE RING's Canada correspondent, was ringside in Detroit for Dirrell-Abraham.

BIG-STADIUM BOXING

Retro-Fad Or The Trend Of The Future?

By Don Stradley

September 28, 1976, was supposed to mark boxing's triumphant return to Yankee Stadium, with Muhammad Ali defending the heavyweight championship against his old rival Ken Norton. Unfortunately, the first Yankee Stadium bout in 17 years was marred by the NYPD protest that allowed muggers and vandals to turn the Bronx into a war zone. As for the fight, a close decision for Ali, Sports Illustrated *called it "one of the worst heavyweight title fights in history." The disastrous night crystallized the feeling that boxing was no longer fit for stadiums. By 1978, when a small crowd of 4,500 saw Larry Holmes defeat Norton for the WBC title at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, boxing's stadium era had quietly segued into the casino era.*

For the most part, American boxing still belongs to casinos. But the man who promoted the last Yankee Stadium debacle thinks he can bring boxing back to the big venues. He's off to a good start, for he has come armed with a smiling torpedo from the Philippines ...

COWBOYS STADIUM: PHOTO BY MARK RALSTON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES
ESPRIT ARENA: PHOTO BY CHRISTOF KOEPSEL/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

From Dallas to Düsseldorf, big-stadium boxing is making a comeback, filling large venues such as Dallas Cowboys Stadium for the Manny Pacquiao-Joshua Clottey fight and the ESPRIT Arena for Wladimir Klistchko-Eddie Chambers bout in Düsseldorf (inset).

The most significant thing about Manny Pacquiao's triumph over Joshua Clottey was that it took place at Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas. The bout drew an astonishing 50,994 fans, making it an unabashed hit for promoter Bob Arum and Cowboys owner Jerry Jones. In fact, Pacquiao-Clottey drew the largest crowd for a fight on American soil since 1993, when Julio Cesar Chavez fought Pernell Whitaker at the Alamodome in front of 59,000, and it easily surpassed the 45,000 who turned out for the 1998 Oscar De La Hoya-Patrick Charpentier bout at El Paso's Sun Bowl.

But there's more to the story. One week after Pacquiao's win, 51,500 turned up at Dusseldorf's ESPRIT Arena to watch heavyweight champion Wladimir Klitschko knock out Eddie Chambers. Klitschko's previous bout, a stoppage of Ruslan Chagaev, drew 61,000 to Veltins Arena in Gelsenkirchen. In 2007, Joe Calzaghe's bout with Mikkel Kessler drew 50,000 to Wales' Millennium Stadium, and in 2008, Ricky Hatton defeated Juan Lazcano in front of 55,000 at the City of Manchester Stadium.

A stadium trend seems to be upon us, and if Arum has his way, it will continue in America as well as overseas. Arum has already lined up Yankee Stadium for this summer's Miguel Cotto-Yuri Foreman bout and has a handshake deal with Jones for future bouts.

Arum has plenty of experience with stadiums, going back to the 1960s when Ali was fighting at the Houston Astrodome. Don King worked the stadiums, too, most notably the Chavez-Greg Haugen bout at Estadio Azteca in Mexico City. That one drew an amazing 132,247 spectators. Granted, in this era of pay-per-view events, a monster attendance number is not as vital as it was in the past, and no stadium on the planet could hold the millions of fans who bought the De La Hoya-Floyd Mayweather bout in 2007. Still, there are many pluses to putting a fight in a stadium.

With more seating available, ticket prices become more affordable. Even ringside seats for Pacquiao-Clottey were priced at a rather reasonable $700. Also, a stadium makes boxing feel like a legit mainstream attraction, as opposed to the niche feel offered by a casino setting. A stadium provides something that has been missing from boxing during the past two decades of Las Vegas fights, and that's grandeur.

Casinos undoubtedly have benefits, such as handling publicity, offering free rooms to a fighter and his camp, and guaranteeing a certain number of high rollers will buy the expensive tickets. The MGM Grand, which offers a modest, 16,800-seat arena, hosted the De La Hoya-Mayweather bout, which set the record for live gate receipts

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Miguel Cotto and Yuri Foreman pose at Yankee Stadium during the press conference to announce their June fight at the new venue. Bob Arum promoted the last fight at the old Yankee Stadium (Ali-Norton III) and will also promote the first card at the new stadium.

PHOTO BY HOLLY STEIN/GETTY IMAGES

When Julio Cesar Chavez fought Greg Haugen at Mexico City's Estadio Azteca on February 20, 1993, an amazing 132,247 spectators turned out for the Don King promotion.

($19-million). Ringside seats were sold for $2,000. Add the paydays received by Oscar and Floyd, and you can see why Las Vegas money is so integral to boxing. But while the elite fighters make more money now than they ever have, there is a downside to being so closely linked to the town that made Siegfried & Roy famous.

A small part of boxing's downturn in this country might be attributed to its being smothered in the phony glitz of Las Vegas. Fighters no longer share the American sports landscape with Babe Ruth and Joe DiMaggio. Instead, they share a room with Jimmy Buffet and Wayne Newton. In exchange for massive paydays for a few fighters, boxing has lost some of its splendor.

Arum hasn't exactly given up on Las Vegas—he lives there—but he's quite verbal about the direction he wants to take. He told a press gathering before Pacquiao-Clottey, "The casinos don't give a damn about anything other than their customers, and it becomes a circus act." He told the *Los Angeles Times*, "If boxing is to be big league, and it's not now, we have to put on these kinds of big events around the world. We can't be big league by putting on the same old casino fights."

At least Arum has had choices. That hasn't always been the case for promoters.

A century ago, a promoter was limited if he required something bigger than a theater or an athletic club. For some, the answer was to build the stadium on site. By 1919, when Tex Rickard was promoting the Jack Dempsey-Jess Willard bout in Toledo, Ohio, he'd turned the construction of the stadium into part of the hype.

"It's the greatest fight stadium of ancient or modern times," reported *The Times*, comparing Rickard's monstrous construction "favorably with the Roman Coliseum and the Yale football bowl at New Haven." Rickard was canny, bragging to reporters about the number of carpenters hired, the amount of wood used, and even the number of nails and bolts. The makeshift stadium was treated as a work of profound architectural design, "the grade or rise is such that the face of each spectator will appear just above the head of the person in front, giving the effect of a sea of faces when viewed from the ring." There was one drawback—the freshly cut pine boards oozed sap in the 100-degree heat, and most customers ended up with stained pants. After the bout, the stadium was sold for $25,000 to The American House Wrecking Co. of Chicago. The wood was auctioned off to the highest bidders.

Dempsey inspired a boxing boom, and soon ballparks all over the country were hosting fights. When Yankees owners Tillinghast L'Hommedieu Huston and Jacob Ruppert spent $2.5-million to build the original stadium in 1922, they did so with boxing in mind.

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Assuming the ring would be at second base, a 15-foot vault was installed directly under the ground; it was wired for members of press row to telegraph stories to their editors.

From 1923 to 1959, the jaunty monolith at River Avenue and East 161st Street hosted 48 nights of professional boxing, sometimes three events in one summer. It was where Sugar Ray Robinson collapsed in the heat against Joey Maxim. It was where Rocky Graziano and Tony Zale fought like animals. And it was where, as the whole of America held its breath, Joe Louis won his rematch with Max Schmeling, the favorite fighter of Nazi Germany.

By the late 1950s, attendance at Yankee Stadium bouts reflected the sport's dip in popularity, as well as changes in the way people watched fights. In 1955, over 61,000 came to see Rocky Marciano fight Archie Moore. By 1959, with television and closed-circuit screenings offering alternatives to the old ballpark, only 30,000 attended Ingemar Johansson's kayo of Floyd Patterson. There was much talk about bringing Ali to Yankee Stadium

WHEN BALLPARK FIGHTS RULED BOXING

It would be impossible to list all the great stadium bouts, but here are 10 that made history:

The Polo Grounds, New York: Jack Dempsey-Luis Firpo (1923)
The wildest six minutes in boxing history, as Dempsey gets knocked out of the ring in the first round and comes back to kayo Firpo in two. *Attendance: 85,000*

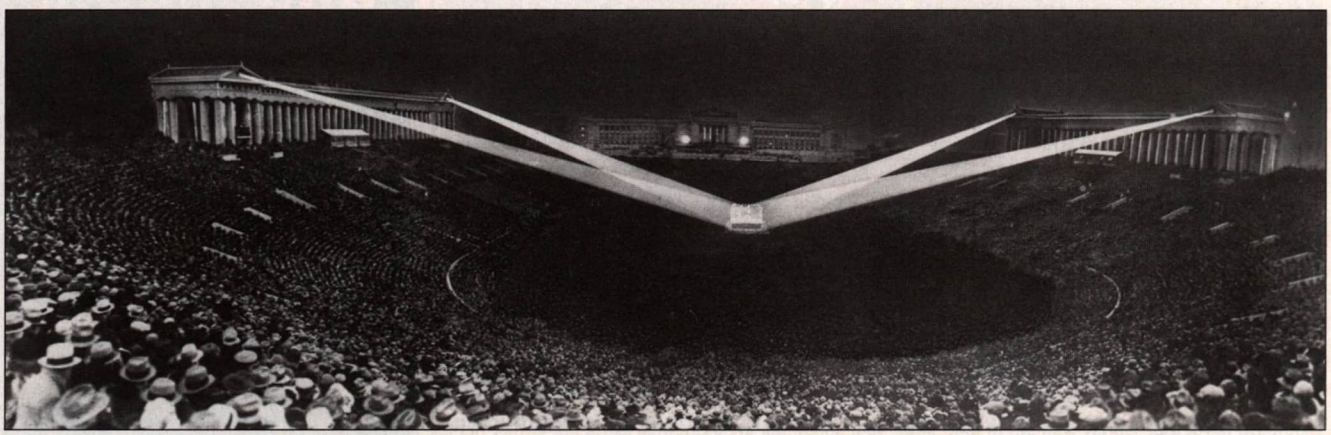
Sesquicentennial Stadium, Philadelphia: Jack Dempsey-Gene Tunney (1926)
Tunney ends the Dempsey era, winning by 10-round decision. *Attendance: 120,757*

Soldier Field, Chicago: Jack Dempsey-Gene Tunney II (1927)
Dempsey nearly regains the title during the battle of the "long count," but Tunney survives and outpoints Dempsey in 10. Perhaps the most revered sporting event of the 1920s. *Attendance: 104,000*

Sandbahn Lokstedt, Hamburg, Germany: Max Schmeling-Walter Neusel (1934)
Two of Germany's top heavyweights do battle, with Schmeling stopping Neusel in nine rounds. *Attendance: 102,000*

Comiskey Park, Chicago: Joe Louis-Jim Braddock (1937)
Louis comes off the canvas to stop Braddock in the eighth, beginning Louis' 11-year reign as heavyweight champion. *Attendance: 45,722*

The Polo Grounds, New York: Joe Louis-Billy Conn (1941)
Louis kayos Conn in the 13th, but only after Conn uses his clever boxing skills to dazzle the champion for several rounds. *Attendance: 54,487*



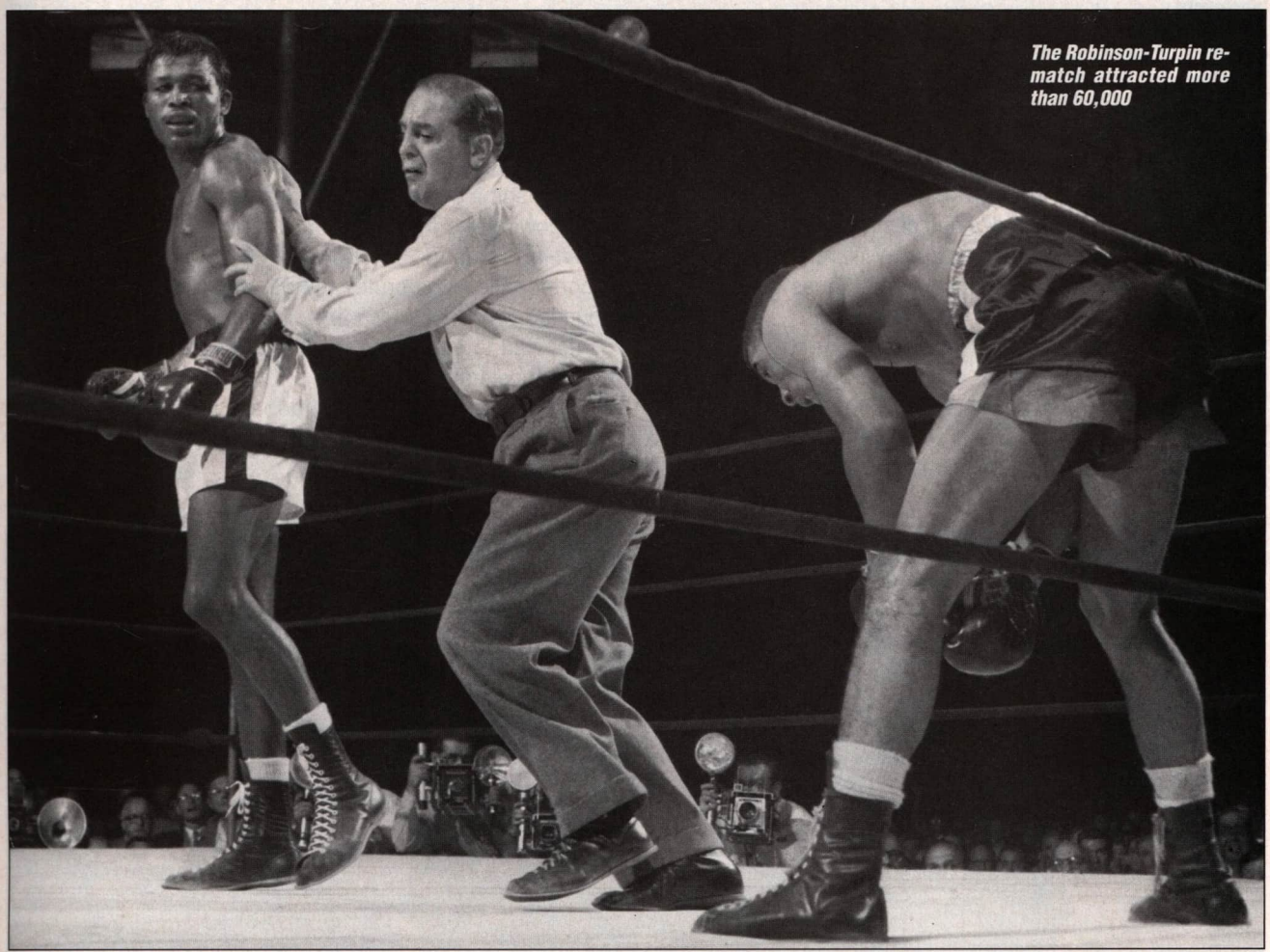
The massive crowd at Soldier Field for Tunney-Dempsey II

during the 1960s, but he wouldn't fight there until a newly remodeled stadium hosted his rubber match with Norton. That bout, incidentally, was an Arum production.

"This is a crowning achievement in my career, to do the last fight in '76 and the first fight at the new stadium in 2010," Arum told the *Associated Press*. "You can't imagine how good it makes me feel, how special it makes me feel. This is a great thing for my legacy."

Arum had approached the Yankee organization many times since 1976, but club officials didn't want to risk damaging the stadium's famous grass. As recently as 2009, Arum declared Yankee Stadium economically unfeasible.

"In New York there's the state and city taxes and something called the independent contractors tax," Arum told the New York *Daily News* last November. Yankee Stadium was being considered as a possible location for a Pacquiao-Mayweather clash, but Arum groused that the fighters would lose approximately 15 percent of their earnings in taxes. "I'd love more than anything to do a fight at Yankee Stadium because then you could bring back all



The Robinson-Turpin rematch attracted more than 60,000

The Polo Grounds, New York: Sugar Ray Robinson-Randy Turpin II (1951)
After Robinson loses the middleweight championship to Turpin in London, he regains the title with a dramatic 10th-round knockout. *Attendance: 61,370*

Municipal Stadium, Philadelphia: Rocky Marciano-Jersey Joe Walcott (1952)
Behind on points and bleeding, Marciano scores a dramatic knockout in the 13th round to win the heavyweight championship. *Attendance: 40,379*

The Superdome, New Orleans: Muhammad Ali- Leon Spinks II (1978)
"The Greatest" avenges an earlier defeat and wins the heavyweight championship for the third time. *Attendance: 63,315*

Olympic Stadium, Montreal: Roberto Duran-Sugar Ray Leonard (1980)
Media darling Leonard loses to Duran in a classic 15-round contest. *Attendance: 46,317*

—D.S.

the history of the great fights there like Louis-Schmeling. But forget about it. It's not going to happen," said Arum.

Predictably, the man known for saying "Yesterday I lied, today I'm telling the truth," changed his tune. By February, word was out that Arum was bringing Cotto-Foreman to Yankee Stadium. Arum hopes Cotto's Puerto Rican audience will combine with Foreman's Jewish audience for some big numbers.

Yankees' Chief Operating Officer Lonn Trost told THE RING, "Bob understands that you have to be on the big

BIRTH OF AN ERA

The first Yankee Stadium boxing show was held in May 1923. A benefit for the mayor's milk fund which featured ringside seats for $20, it was organized by Tex Rickard to find a contender to face champion Jack Dempsey.

Unfortunately for Rickard, there were so few quality heavyweights in that era that he had to resurrect 41-year old Jess Willard, whom Dempsey had destroyed four years earlier for the title. Rickard's plan was to pit Willard against a young contender named Floyd Johnson, with hopes that Johnson would win and go on to fight Dempsey.

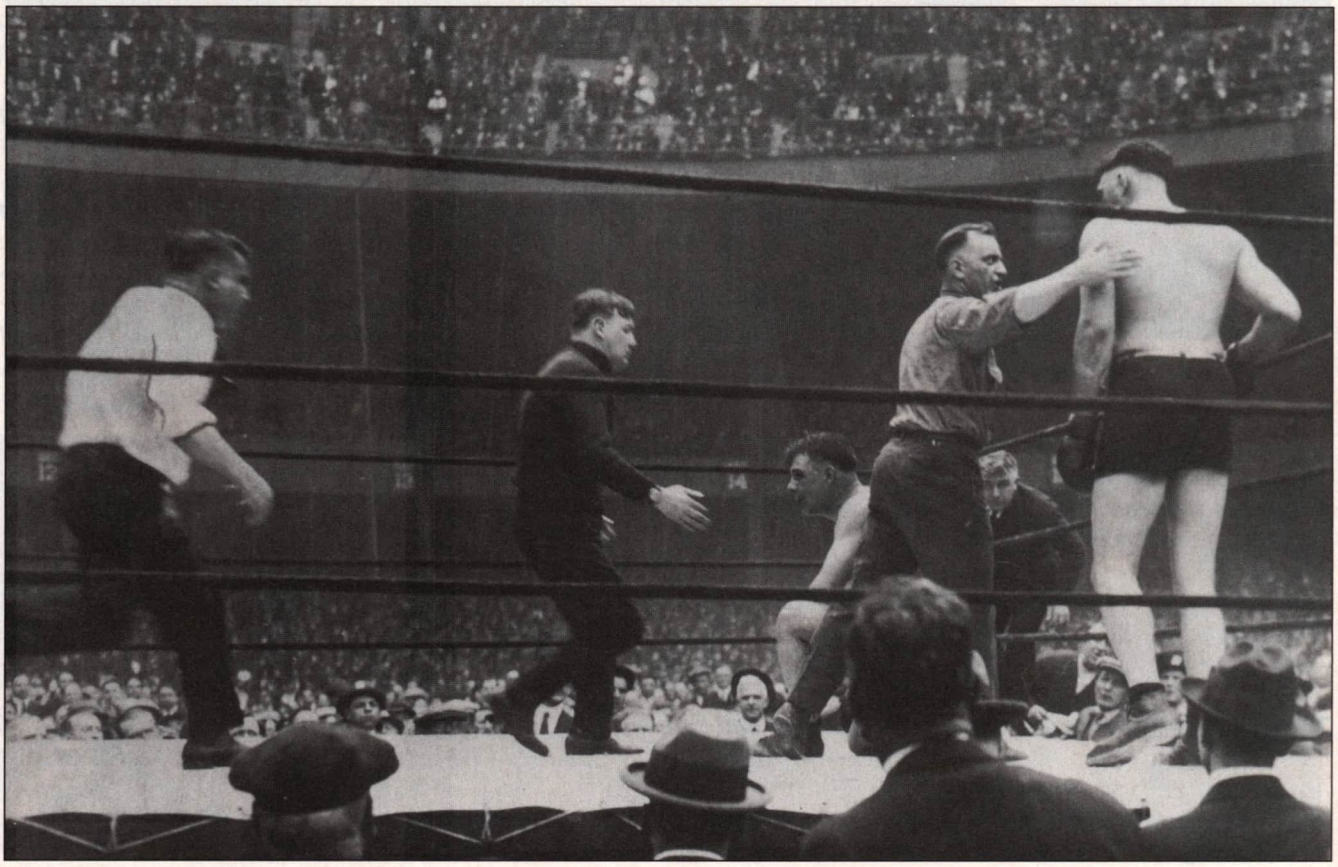
After a less than electrifying undercard featuring the likes of Luis Firpo, Tiny Herman, and Frank Fullton, Willard and Johnson took to the ring for the main event. Yankee Stadium roared with laughter as Willard's weight was announced at a whopping 248, but the laughter stopped as Willard proceeded to outbox Johnson for several rounds.

Then, as if his comeback wasn't dramatic enough, Willard's aging body started to give way. Sensing victory, Johnson took control of the fight with roundhouse swings. An exhausted Willard had to be lifted from his stool by his handlers to start round nine, but late in that round he threw a desperate haymaker that sent Johnson to the canvas. There was still some grit left in the "Pottawatomie Giant," even if he was blowing like a tired horse.

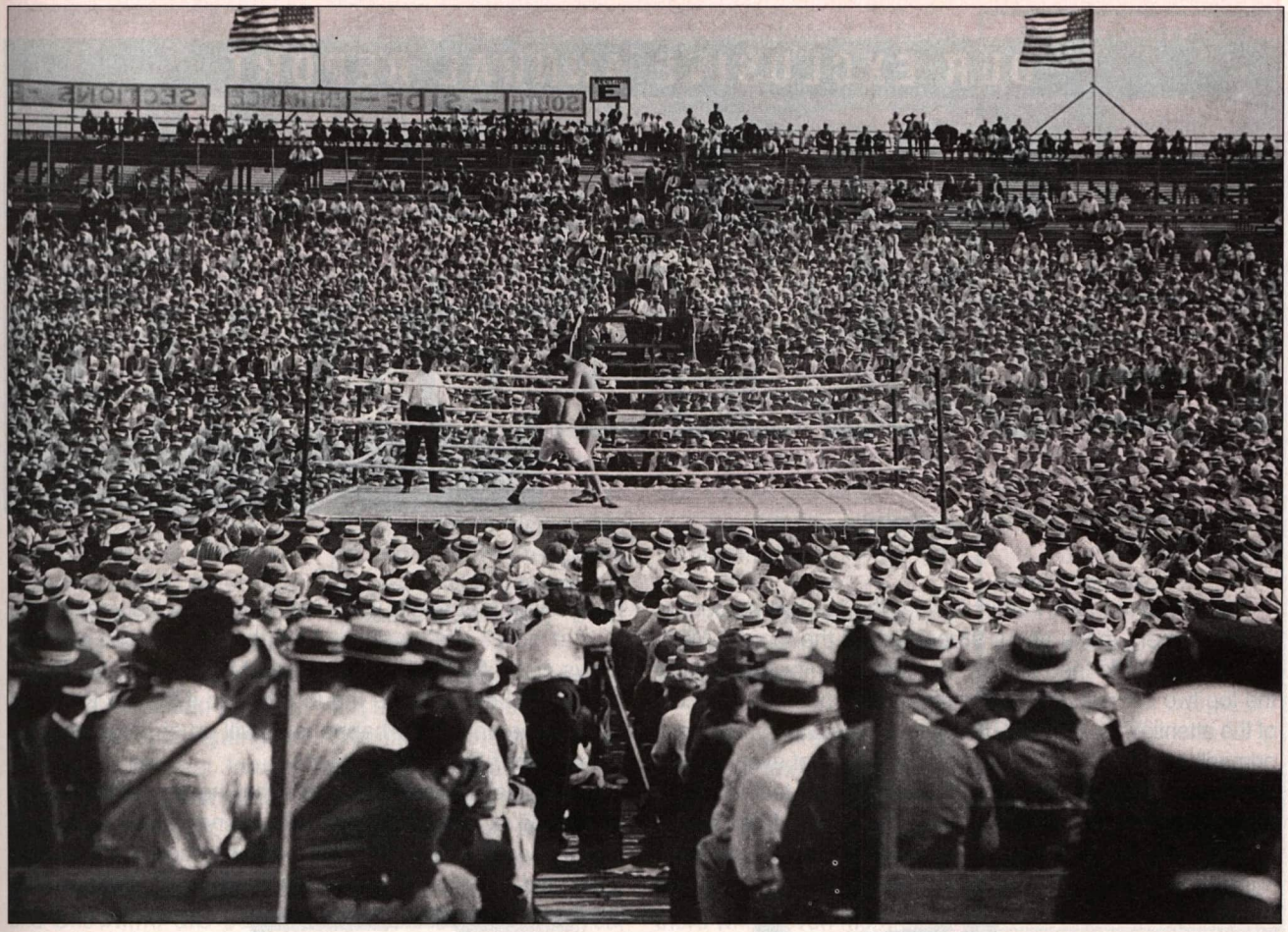
Willard closed the show in the 11th. Using what one reporter called "the brute strength of primitive man," Willard pounded Johnson to the canvas again. This time the younger fighter had to be carried back to his corner, when the fight was immediately stopped.

The drama of Willard's comeback victory helped launch Yankee Stadium as a boxing venue and set the tone for many great fights to come.

—D.S.



Willard rallies to stop Johnson in first fight at Yankee Stadium



Promoter Tex Rickard had a stadium built especially for the Jack Dempsey-Jess Willard heavyweight championship fight in Toledo, Ohio. Afterward, Rickard tore down the stadium and sold the lumber to the highest bidder. Dempsey's popularity launched an era of big-stadium fights.

stage, and there's only one Yankee Stadium. How can you have so much boxing history here and say the taxes are too high? This can rejuvenate boxing."

But can we realistically expect Yankee Stadium to host boxing more than a time or two?

"We're certainly hoping for more fights," Trost said. "This stadium was built as a 365-day-per-year venue. We're planning concerts, football games, and fights. Protecting the grass was the issue in the past, but now we have new methods of keeping the field in good shape."

Despite the enthusiasm of Arum, Jones, and Trost, there are two basic hurdles that will be hard to overcome.

Without the underwriting of casinos, fighters and promoters may not make the kind of money to which they've grown accustomed. Also, there just aren't enough stadium-friendly fighters to fill the seats.

"Cowboys Stadium is impressive," said ring historian Bert Sugar. "It's what God would build if God had money. And Yankee Stadium is great because it gets people talking about boxing. But there's a shortage of name fighters, which is why promoters stopped using stadiums in the first place."

If the stadium vogue continues, though, the customers will be in for something special, as will the fighters. Even Ali, who fought in stadiums all over the world, said after his bout with Norton, "I never thought I'd be so big I could fight in Yankee Stadium."

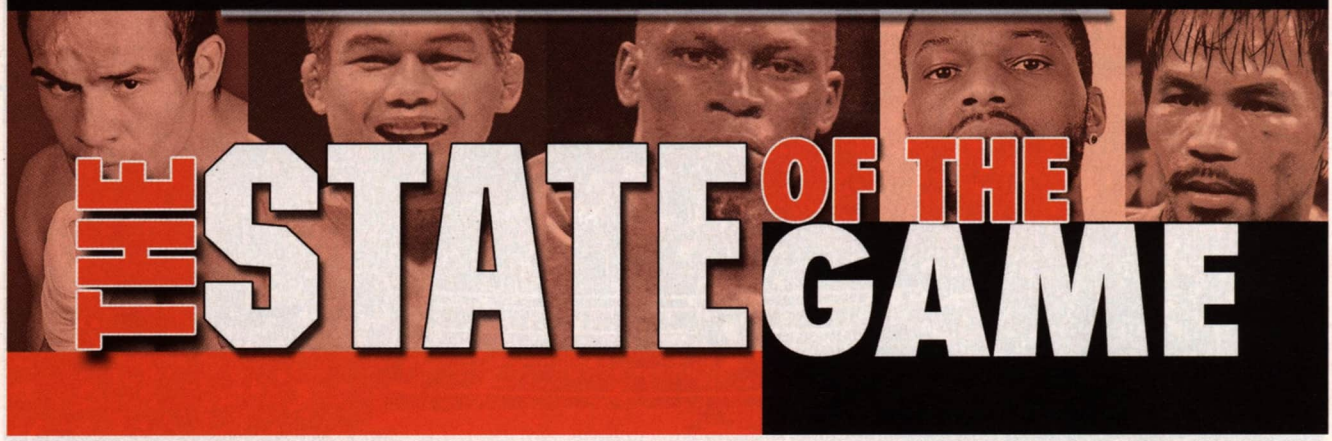
A massive crowd in an open-air stadium hits a primal cord going back to when the ancient Greeks competed to please the gods. With luck, the skies will be clear when Cotto meets Foreman, and another memorable Yankee Stadium bout will unfold under the stars. They'll have a lot to live up to, for the original stadium oversaw some history-making moments, including one that didn't even involve a punch being thrown.

It occurred on the night of May 21, 1927. Before Jack Sharkey was to fight Jim Maloney, ring announcer Joe Humphreys asked the crowd to partake in a moment of prayer for Charles Lindbergh, who'd left New York the previous morning in his gray two-seater, "The Spirit of St Louis," attempting the first nonstop solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. As the customers bowed their heads, thinking of Lindbergh in the friendless twilight, the stadium was blanketed by a beautiful silence. One writer observed, "It was so quiet you could hear a flask drop."

Lindbergh landed safely in Paris. Sharkey stopped Maloney in five. And Yankee Stadium felt like a place where boxing would thrive forever. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

OUR EXCLUSIVE ANNUAL REPORT



THE STATE OF THE GAME

By Eric Raskin

It's often been said that in boxing, the top two percent of the fighters make about 98 percent of the money. Well, we're about to feed directly into that inequity. Not only do the top two percent get most of the money, but they get most of the attention too, and in "The State Of The Game," we focus primarily on that top two percent—the cream of every weight class. Maybe it's not fair to the 145th best junior featherweight in the world, but hey, there's a reason he's only 145th best.

Still, you have to admit, we go deeper and include more fighters in State Of The Game than just about any other article you'll read all year. Where else will you find Wladimir Klitschko, Fernando Guerrero, Alfonso Gomez, and Hekkie Budler all discussed in the same story?

Basically, the State Of The Game is just what it sounds like: an all-encompassing exploration of where every division in boxing stands at this particular moment. As for the state of the sport as a whole, we know the balance of power is continuing to shift away from American fighters and away from the heavyweight division, but does that mean boxing is any worse off than it was a year ago or five years ago or 10 years ago? In a global sense, and judged in relativity to the economic climate across most of the world, no. Remember, some people in both the boxing community and the mainstream media opined three years ago that Oscar De La Hoya vs. Floyd Mayweather was going to be the last megafight we'd see for years. How laughable is that now? We've since had three different pay-per-views cross the million-buy mark, Mayweather vs. Shane Mosley will certainly be the fourth, and if Manny Pacquiao vs. Mayweather ever happens, it will crush every number Mayweather-De La Hoya posted.

Of course, all that this means is that the guys at the very top are getting exponentially richer while everyone else is struggling to make ends meet. Hey, that's the way boxing has always been, and in a nutshell, that's how life works. Boxing has loads of problems, no doubt, but year after year, it entertains and amazes those loyal followers who persevere through all the crap to get to the good stuff.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pacquiao celebrates win over Clottey

Before we get to the meat of the State Of The Game, a couple of quick notes about the sidebars that you'll see accompanying each division. First, "Most Avoided" can refer to either a fighter who has been avoided recently or one who we suspect will be avoided starting now. And second, "Deserves A Title Shot" means different things in different divisions. In divisions with a RING champion, the designation goes to whoever most deserves a RING title shot, regardless of whether they already hold an alphabet title. In divisions without a RING champion, we've named someone worthy of an alphabet title shot. ***(Note: This section is based on results through April 18, 2010.)***

HEAVYWEIGHT

Forget the 1970s—this is the Golden Age of the heavyweight division! (Well, it is if you live in Germany or a former Soviet bloc nation, anyway.)

In the good ol' U.S. of A., the division has arguably never been this weak. The sad truth is that it's been 20 years since the emergence of the last great American heavyweight, Evander Holyfield. Nobody since has come close to greatness. And we can't blame the Klitschko brothers for that. America's most athletic big kids don't want to be the next Muhammad Ali anymore. Today's would-be American heavyweights grew up wanting to be the next Michael Jordan or the next Reggie White.

We *can*, however, blame **Wladimir** and **Vitali Klitschko** for the fact that HBO and Showtime are barely in the heavyweight business anymore. The Ukrainian brothers employ an undeniably efficient and effective style that leads them to easy, drama-free victories. Good for them. Bad for TV audiences. And since the Klitschkos will never fight each other, the division has been reduced to a mess with no single leader (even though Wlad is THE RING champ), where we see one hopeless challenger after another come up way short—both in terms of height and performance—against one of the brothers.

Wladimir's diet since the last "State Of The Game" consisted of **Ruslan Chagaev** and **Eddie Chambers**—both top-five RING contenders before getting stopped by Klitschko. Vitali, meanwhile, TKO'd **Chris Arreola** and decisioned **Kevin Johnson**—both top-10 heavyweights. Other than calling the Klitschkos boring or defensive-minded, there's no criticism you can levy. They're fighting the best available opponents (Vitali's upcoming bout against **Albert Sosnowski** excluded), and it's hard to find a round either has lost. One after another, somewhat promising up-and-comers (American or otherwise) are having the shine rubbed off by the Klitschkos, which isn't good for business in America, but it seems to be working out just fine in Germany.

About the best we can hope for is that the more exciting heavyweights fight each other, regardless of whether supremacy is at stake. That list includes **Tomasz Adamek** and Arreola (who are squaring off just after our press deadline), titlist **David Haye**, and the undefeated **Alexander Povetkin**, who is somewhat relevant on the American scene now that he's being trained by Teddy Atlas.

Beyond those guys, there isn't much to get excited about. Chambers is a skilled boxer but might have better title hopes at cruiserweight. Young veteran puncher **Sam Peter** and old veteran puncher **David Tua** seem destined to let us down. Chagaev and **Nicolay Valuev** are serviceable in their own ways, but it's hard to offer them a better adjective than that. We don't know yet what **Denis Boytsov** can do; maybe he'll be another solid Povetkin type. And Cuban **Odlanier Solis** has the talent, but his gut tells our gut not to get overly excited.

Think About It: People talk all the time about the WBA's inexplicable love for **John Ruiz** (and, let's face it, any love for Ruiz is inexplicable), but there's another heavyweight out there who's even more of an illogical alphabet-rankings fave: **Ray Austin**. "The Rainman" once achieved the mandatory-challenger position in the IBF, which led to him getting pancaked by Wladimir Klitschko in two rounds, and now he's the mandatory in the WBC, which means he'll soon have the opportunity for a pancaking from big brother Vitali. What has Austin done to earn his number-one rankings? The first time around, he drew with Larry Donald, drew with Sultan Ibragimov, and won a split decision over Owen Beck. This time around, he's beaten Andrew Golota (on an injury quit-job), Julius Long, and DaVarryl Williamson. If you ask us, the other "Rain Man," the Dustin Hoffman character with autism, could compile better boxing rankings than these alphabet buffoons.

HEAVYWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Wladimir Klitschko

BEST BOXER
Wladimir Klitschko

MOST PROTECTED
Deontay Wilder

MOST AVOIDED
Vitali Klitschko

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Oliver McCall

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
David Haye-
Wladimir Klitschko

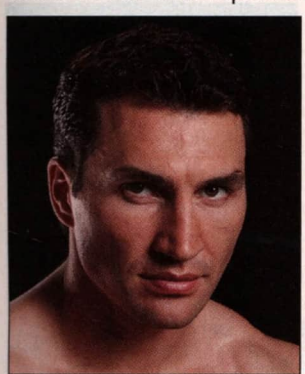
DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Vitali Klitschko

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Chris Arreola

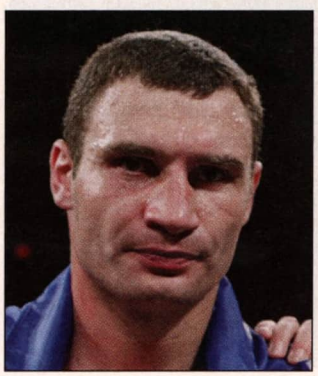
ON THE WAY UP
Odlanier Solis

ON THE WAY DOWN
Martin Rogan

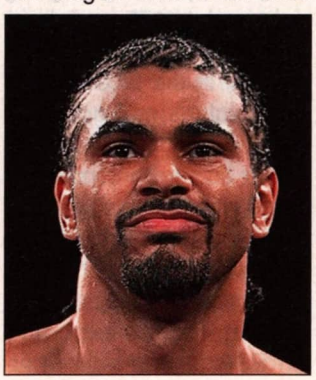
BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Tony Grano KO 4
Travis Kauffman



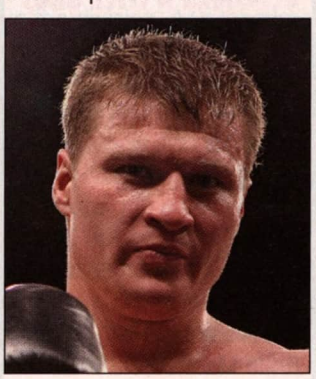
Wladimir Klitschko



Vitali Klitschko



David Haye



Alexander Povetkin

CRUISERWEIGHT

Cruiserweight has always been one of those revolving-door divisions. The best fighters don't stay long; they invariably move up to heavyweight in hopes of making the big bucks. And for every successful cruiserweight who moves up, there's usually a failed small-ish heavyweight who moves down to try to claim a belt in the 200-pound division. Plus you have significant light heavyweights making the move up every so often—and occasionally you have cruisers making the move down to 175. All of these revolving-door qualities have been on display in the past year or so, and the division has suffered slightly from all of the instability.

CRUISERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Marco Huck

BEST BOXER
Steve Cunningham

MOST PROTECTED
B.J. Flores

MOST AVOIDED
Steve Cunningham

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Herbie Hide

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Marco Huck-Danny Green

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Steve Cunningham

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Ola Afolabi

ON THE WAY UP
Denis Lebedev

ON THE WAY DOWN
Adam Richards

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Ola Afolabi KO 9
Enzo Maccarinelli

PHOTO BY GREGG PORTEOUS/NEWSPIX/GETTY IMAGES

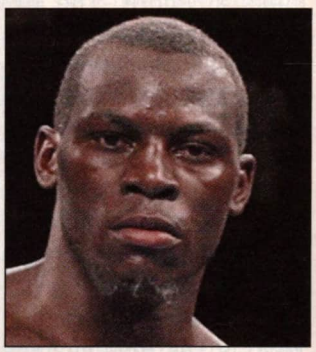
Green floors Jones in the opening round

Tomasz Adamek gave up THE RING title and moved up to heavyweight (following the lead of previous RING champ David Haye), depriving the division of its best and most exciting fighter. In return, the heavyweights gave back **Brian Minto**, who'll challenge for an alphabet belt at cruiser shortly after our press deadline (not a fair trade, we realize). Also rumored to be considering a move down is Eddie Chambers, who recently learned he can't beat the Klitschkos and might have a better chance of claiming a belt at cruiser. Then there was **Zsolt Erdei**, who moved up from light heavyweight in November '09 to take a belt from **Giacobbe Fragomeni** but is now planning on going right back to 175 pounds.

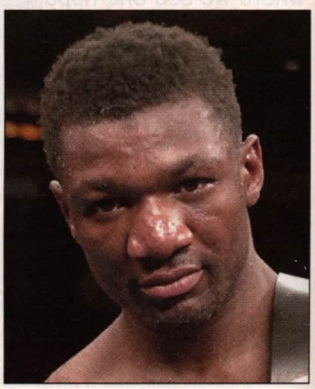
The primary pillar of stability in the face of all of the comings and goings is **Steve Cunningham**, a highly skilled, supremely conditioned boxer who just can't get any breaks on the business end of boxing. His latest drama came when he was slated for significant exposure on ESPN2 in a vacant alphabet title bout against **Matt Godfrey** in March, but promoter Don King defaulted on his winning purse bid, the fight seemed off, organizers hurried to resurrect it, and Godfrey made the dubious decision to back out. Now it appears Cunningham will face *The Contender* Season Four winner **Troy Ross** instead, which will hopefully set the winner on the path to overdue accolades and financial rewards.

Aside from Cunningham, Ross, and Godfrey, nearly everyone else of note in the division is based in Europe. A fight between **Krzysztof Wlodarczyk** and Fragomeni was scheduled for after our press deadline, and the winner vs. the Cunningham-Ross winner could crown a RING champion. **Marco Huck** (who was slated to defend against small-heavyweight-turned-cruiser Minto) is an exciting and hard-punching beltholder based in Germany who scored a close win last December over Los Angeles-based Nigerian **Ola Afolabi**. And **Denis Lebedev** is an undefeated Russian fighter gradually gaining notice.

One wild card in the division, a fighter who hails from neither North America nor Europe, is Australia's **Danny Green**, who sent shockwaves through the boxing world by stopping Roy Jones in the first round last October. Based on that single win, Green is one of the biggest names in the division, and any cruiserweight looking for a payday would happily head Down Under to take him on.



Steve Cunningham



Troy Ross

Think About It: Due mostly to less taxing fighting schedules and advances in medical science, more fighters than ever are experiencing success deep into their 30s. Even so, it's an extreme rarity when a boxer *turns pro* in his 30s and experiences success. That's what makes Fragomeni such a remarkable story; after a lengthy amateur career that peaked with an Olympic appearance in 2000 at the age of 31, the Italian finally turned pro, won his first 21 fights, eventually claimed an alphabet belt and is still a contender as he nears his 41st birthday. It's kind of amazing that someone like **Herbie Hide**, who turned pro in 1989, is actually two years younger than Fragomeni. But as Teddy Atlas likes to say, you measure a boxer's age by the punches he's taken, not the date on his birth certificate.

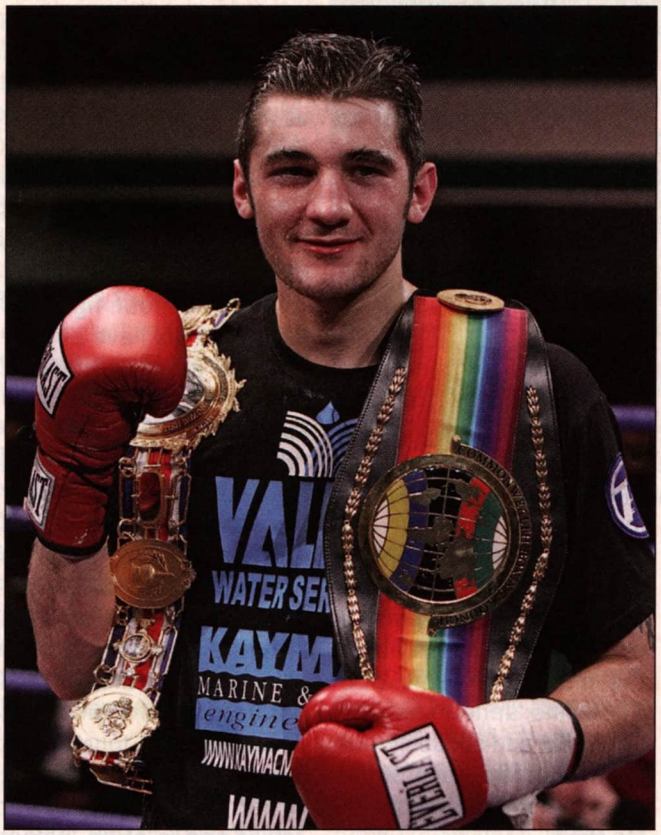


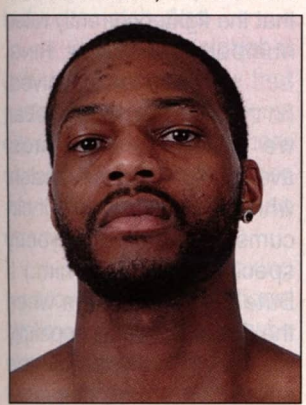
PHOTO BY DEAN MOUHTAROPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES

Cleverly poses with his British and European title belts

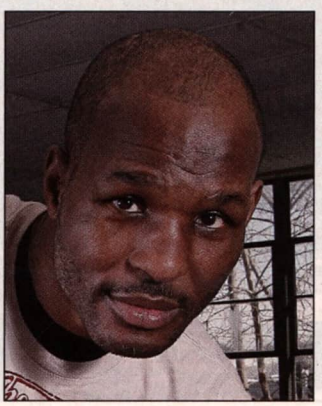
LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

For a while now, we've been wondering when the guard was going to change at 175 pounds. **Roy Jones** entered the division way back in 1996 (point of reference: the O.J. Simpson civil trial was underway at the time), and ever since, the division belonged to fighters of his generation. A year ago, Jones was still a viable commodity, **Bernard Hopkins** was arguably the best fighter in the division, **Antonio Tarver** was somewhat relevant, and **Glen Johnson** was riding a wave of nine-straight fights he either won or could claim he deserved to win. Now, Jones has no viability, Hopkins is almost certainly not the best, Tarver is irrelevant (except as a commentator), and Johnson has suffered a controversy-free setback. Finally, the new generation is taking over at light heavyweight.

That new generation is highlighted by three fighters all in their 20s, with the leader being **Chad Dawson**, who won rematches against both Tarver and Johnson in the last 12 months. Dawson is followed closely by Canada-based Haitian **Jean Pascal**, who impressed and entertained in twice defeating **Adrian Diaconu**. And completing the trio is **Tavoris Cloud**, a scary puncher who desperately needs to get busier and stop passing up opportunities. All three have major fights on the horizon. Dawson and Pascal will meet each other in August, and the fight will crown a new RING champion. And Cloud is expected to take on Johnson, with a chance to once and for all finalize the generational shift.



Chad Dawson



Bernard Hopkins

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Tavoris Cloud

BEST BOXER
Chad Dawson

MOST PROTECTED
Marcus Oliveira

MOST AVOIDED
Karo Murat

IS HE STILL AROUND?
David Telesco

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Chad Dawson-Jean Pascal

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Chad Dawson

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Jean Pascal

ON THE WAY UP
Ismayl Sillakh

ON THE WAY DOWN
Hugo Garay

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Jean Pascal W 12
Adrian Diaconu (first fight)

There are also three lesser-known, unbeaten fighters entering the picture and moving the focus from the past to the future: **Vyacheslav Uzelkov** of the Ukraine, **Karo Murat** of Germany, and **Nathan Cleverly** of Wales. Meanwhile, American **Chris Henry** isn't undefeated, but he is a heavy-handed X-factor in the division. And longtime WBO beltholder **Zsolt Erdei**, who moved up to cruiser for one fight and is now moving back down, is also something of a X-factor. (He's not an X-factor worth getting excited about, but he's an X-factor just the same.)

Oh, and because this is boxing and no division is safe from alphabet lunacy, two fringe contenders named

Beibut Shumenov and **Gabriel Campillo** have traded a belt back and forth in a pair of controversial decisions. The less you know about this unfortunate situation, the better. Just understand that Shumenov has a trinket and Dawson, the division's best fighter, does not. Yes indeed, this division would benefit greatly from seeing a RING champ crowned.

Think About It: This division has a couple of amazing fortysomething fighters, but perhaps the most amazing resume of all belongs to **Lourival Luiz Da Silva**, a 42-year-old light heavy from Brazil. Da Silva turned pro in 1989. He lost his pro debut. He took three years off then returned in 1992 with a win, evening his record at 1-1. Sounds a little like how Bernard Hopkins started out, right? But then it takes a very un-Hopkins turn. Da Silva went from 1-1 to 1-36. Then he broke his 35-fight losing streak with a six-round majority decision win ... and got right back to business, losing 22 in a row. Da Silva now boasts a record of 2-58. We told you his resume was amazing. We just didn't specify whether it was amazingly good or amazingly awful.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

A year ago in "The State Of The Game," we wrote that "the outlook isn't all that interesting" at super middleweight. In our defense, the "Super Six World Boxing Classic" was but a twinkle in Ken Hershman's eye at the time. Shortly after the magazine came out, Showtime announced the Super Six and suddenly 168 pounds became one of the most intriguing divisions in the sport.

We've already seen **Arthur Abraham** vs. **Jermain Taylor**, **Carl Froch** vs. **Andre Dirrell**, **Andre Ward** vs. **Mikkel Kessler**, and Dirrell vs. Abraham. Plus by the time you read this, you'll have seen Kessler vs. Froch, and then we'll still have Ward vs. **Allan Green**, Ward vs. Dirrell, Abraham vs. Froch, and Kessler vs. Green on the horizon. And that's all before the single-elimination portion of the tournament begins.

The first four fights of the Super Six have already shaken up the division. Kessler and Abraham have suffered upset defeats, Abraham and Dirrell have lost the zeros at the ends of their records, Ward and Dirrell have made the leap from prospects to elite contenders, Taylor has probably seen his time as a contender come to an end, and Froch's girlfriend has become an international sensation. The tournament is not without it's problems; Green had to sub in for Taylor and is at an instant competitive disadvantage by not having a first-round match, while injuries have caused postponements that might extend a tournament that already spans about two years. But nothing in boxing is perfect. All we can ask for is that fights of consequence get made, and the Super Six guarantees that. The result is that a division that wasn't "all that interesting" is suddenly among boxing's hottest.

Perhaps the greatest flaw of the Super Six, however, is that the fighter currently rated number one by THE RING, **Lucian Bute**, isn't involved. (In the accompanying sidebar, we called Bute the most avoided fighter in the division, which is more a result of circumstance than of anybody specifically ducking him.) If Bute is still unbeaten when the Super Six ends, hopefully we'll see him take on the winner and bring complete clarity to the division. And if it

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Arthur Abraham

BEST BOXER
Andre Ward

MOST PROTECTED
Server Emerlaev

MOST AVOIDED
Lucian Bute

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Keith Holmes

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Andre Ward-Andre Dirrell

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Andre Dirrell

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Carl Froch

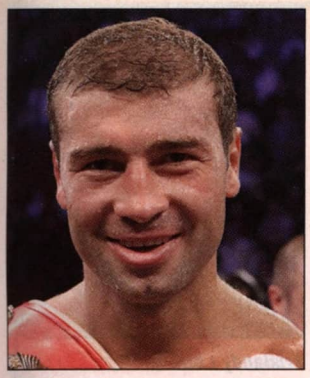
ON THE WAY UP
Peter Quillin

ON THE WAY DOWN
Jermain Taylor

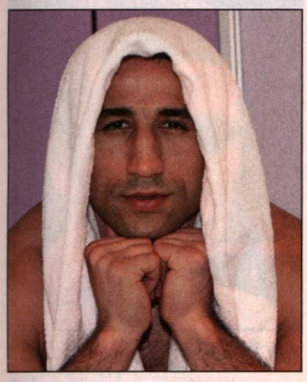
BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Carl Froch KO 12
Jermain Taylor

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Froch finds Dirrell's chin with a left



Lucian Bute



Arthur Abraham

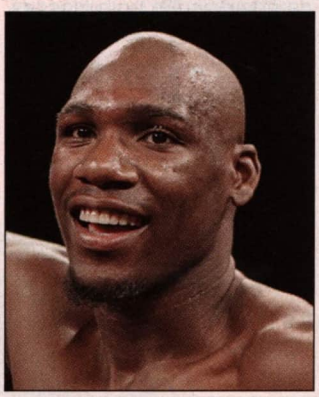
happens in front of 100,000 screaming Bute fans at some outdoor stadium in Canada, all the better.

After the Super Six competitors and Bute, the quality certainly falls off. **Sakio Bika** is a dangerous and awkward veteran, but his career has been frustratingly mismanaged since he won the third season of *The Contender*. **Librado Andrade** is still a tough out for most fighters, but a lot of the luster came off when Bute stopped him with a bodyshot in their rematch. And **Robert Stieglitz** holds an alphabet belt, but you know how that goes. That he's lost by knockout to Andrade reveals more about where he stands than any trinket he can strap around his waist.

Think About It: Boxing fans love cross-generational hypothetical matches, so who wouldn't be excited about a fantasy Super Six tournament featuring the greatest super middleweights of all-time? This is not an old division (it debuted in 1984), so the list of greats isn't what it would be in, say, the middleweight division. Still, how's this for a dream Super Six: Roy Jones, Joe Calzaghe, Sugar Ray Leonard, James Toney, Nigel Benn, and Steve Collins. Interestingly, just like the real modern-day Super Six, it matches three Americans and three Europeans. Who's the pick? In each preliminary round, well, we'll just follow the example set in 2009-'10 and go with whoever's fighting in his hometown. Overall, we tend to lean toward Jones, who was in his absolute prime at this weight, to win the tournament.

MIDDLEWEIGHT

After one of the greatest championship reigns in middleweight history was authored by Bernard Hopkins from 1995-2005, his successors have given us two of the most disappointing reigns ever at 160 pounds. First Jermain Taylor couldn't seem to win a fight without a little help from the judges, and then **Kelly Pavlik** beat Taylor but couldn't defeat anyone else besides come-forward clubfighters. Will **Sergio Martinez** be different? He certainly has the talent, but



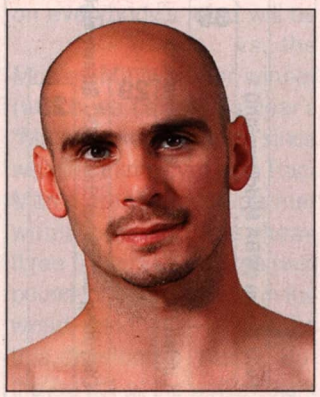
Paul Williams

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Freshly minted middleweight champion Martinez

at 35, he probably isn't going to reign for 10 years like B-Hop did.

Still, from what Martinez has shown in his last four fights, all HBO-televised bouts against world-class foes, we can safely say he didn't get to the top on a fluke. In three consecutive fights, he arguably deserved to go 3-0 against **Kermit Cintron**, **Paul Williams**, and Pavlik. The Argentine boxed two-thirds of a perfect fight against Pavlik in April, claiming THE RING title in the process, and now it's up to him to put together the dominant reign we've been waiting to see for the last five years. For all we know, though, he might just move back down to his more natural weight class, 154 pounds, and abandon the middleweight title. And we couldn't blame



Kelly Pavlik

him if he did; there just aren't that many worthy opponents for him at 160.

There's a rematch with Pavlik, of course (though Pavlik's badly cut eye needs to heal first), and there's a rematch with Williams (provided "The Punisher" has defeated

MIDDLEWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Kelly Pavlik

BEST BOXER
Sergio Martinez

MOST PROTECTED
Hassan N'Dam N'Jikam

MOST AVOIDED
Paul Williams

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Bronco McKart

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Paul Williams-
Sergio Martinez II

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Paul Williams

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Paul Williams

ON THE WAY UP
Daniel Jacobs

ON THE WAY DOWN
Amin Asikainen

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Paul Williams W 12
Sergio Martinez

Cintron by the time you read this). And maybe you could argue that veteran beltholder **Felix Sturm** still has a little bit of name value based on his 2004 fight with Oscar De La Hoya. But beyond that, the contenders are a mediocre group made up of fighters with no Q-rating at all in America.

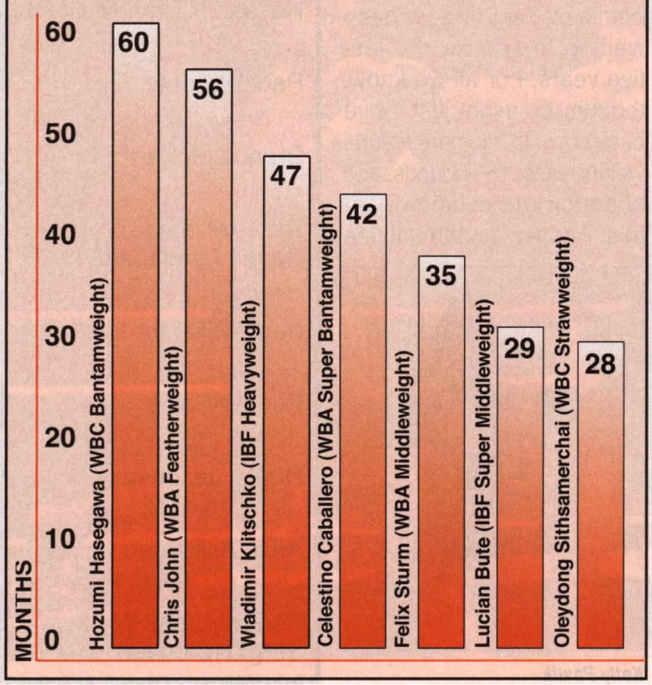
Does Martinez vs. **Sebastian Sylvester** excite you? Perhaps Martinez vs. **Khoren Gevor** or **Matthew Macklin**? Maybe a fight against one of the Aussies, **Anthony Mundine** or **Daniel Geale**? There's always **Sebastian Zbik**, who helps fill the division's Sebastian quota. Or perhaps you prefer limited veterans **David Lopez** and **Roman Karmazin**.

Two of the biggest names in the division aren't currently ranked in the top 10. One is **Winky Wright**, who's now 38 and hasn't fought in over a year but could probably still beat several of the guys rated by THE RING. And the other is **Sergio Mora**, who would probably be in slightly over his head against Martinez, but it would certainly be the biggest battle of Sergios boxing has ever seen.

Think About It: Okay, the middleweight division isn't very deep right now. But if you're not in a hurry, if you can be patient for a year or two, you'll find that 160 pounds has a ton of potential. Look at this list of young prospects: **Daniel Jacobs**, **Fernando Guerrero**, **Matt Korobov**, **David Lemieux**, **Craig McEwan**, **Andy Lee**, and **Gennady Golovkin**. They're not all going to pan out, obviously (Lee already has one discouraging loss, in fact), but if a few of them do, we could have real middleweight depth, something we haven't enjoyed in a couple of decades.

LONGEST REIGNING TITLISTS

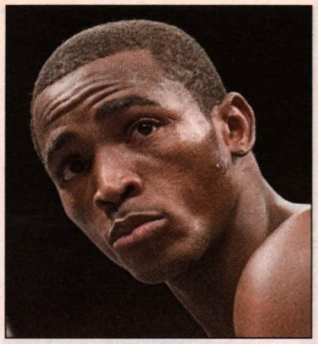
The graph below illustrates the game's most-established titlists (RING, WBC, WBA, or IBF), along with the number of consecutive months each has held the title. Three names from last year's list are gone: Ricky Hatton and Ruslan Chagaev lost titles against superior opponents inside the ring, while Arthur Abraham surrendered one when he elected to move up a division. Sadly, many fighters these days aren't fortunate enough to lose their titles by such traditional methods. Instead, many title reigns end with senseless alphabet strippings, which is part of why we don't see any seven- or eight-year tenures on this list like we used to. Still, we do have our first five-year reign in several years, so congratulations to Hozumi Hasegawa and to the rest of the consistent winners who made this list:



JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

The first thing you'll notice looking at the accompanying sidebar for the 154-pound division is that several of the names we've slotted in are exactly the same as in the 160-pound division's sidebar. THE RING has always been willing to rank a fighter in multiple divisions if he's active in multiple divisions, and it just so happens that arguably the two best fighters in either weight class are campaigning in both classes. **Sergio Martinez** and **Paul Williams** are key players at middleweight, and they're every bit as key at junior middle. A rematch between the two of them is the dream fight at 160. And it's the dream fight at 154 also.

Perhaps we should say, it's the dream fight assuming Williams has beaten **Kermit Cintron** by the time you're reading this. That feels like



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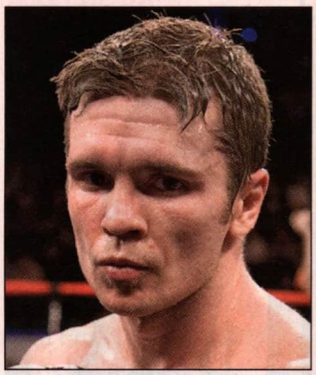


Yuri Foreman

a semi-safe assumption, but if it turns out to be incorrect, then Cintron-Martinez II, a rematch to their controversial draw (which nearly everyone thinks Martinez won but was certainly a competitive affair) becomes a logical option. Would it take place at middleweight or junior middleweight? Who the heck knows? As long as we get the fights we want to see, it doesn't really matter at what weight they agree to fight.

One guy who does need to be concerned about the weight he's agreeing to fight at is **Miguel Cotto**, who's lending additional star power to the 154-pound division by moving up to challenge **Yuri Foreman** for an alphabet belt at Yankee Stadium in June. At 5'7", Cotto is very short for this weight class and might be in for some stylistic problems against 5'11" boxer-mover Foreman (remember that Freddie Roach deemed Foreman too tall for Manny Pacquiao). But if there's

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Alfredo Angulo

BEST BOXER
Sergio Martinez

MOST PROTECTED
Austin Trout

MOST AVOIDED
Sebastian Lujan

IS HE STILL AROUND?
J.C. Candelo

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Paul Williams-Sergio Martinez II

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Paul Williams

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Paul Williams

ON THE WAY UP
Erislandy Lara

ON THE WAY DOWN
Daniel Santos

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Ryan Rhodes KO 7 Jamie Moore

one thing you can say about Cotto, it's that he fears no one, and if he defeats Foreman, this division gets considerably more interesting at the top. The same could be said if pressure-fighting **Alfredo Angulo** has beaten **Joel Julio** by the time you read this, as "El Perro" is one of those all-offense fighters you'd like to see in the ring with just about anyone.

Titlist **Cory Spinks** is not quite so guaranteed to excite, though the St. Louis veteran did provide some thrills last time out in winning a split decision over **Deandre Latimore**. Unfortunately, "last time out" was a full year ago; Spinks needs to get back in the ring (and, according to reports, come down from cruiserweight) if he's going to make a little money in the twilight of his career.

There are plenty of other solid fighters and respectable names in the division, like **Ryan Rhodes**, **Sechew Powell**, **Joachim Alcine**, and the inactive but talented **Sergei Dzindziruk**. And let's not forget about **James Kirkland**, who's currently in jail but instantly becomes one of the division's must-watch fighters again the moment he returns to the ring.

Think About It: Neither of them are particularly active, relevant fighters anymore, but we just have to comment on Tarvis and Travis Simms, the latter of whom was a junior middleweight beltholder for a short while. As you probably heard, the twin brothers were arrested in April for fighting with each other in Travis' home, and Travis' 10-year-old daughter allegedly got bitten on the arm trying to break up the scuffle. What does this all mean in the big picture for boxing? It serves as a reminder that it's a perfectly natural thing for brothers to sometimes fight with each other. So why not get paid for it? All right, we'll cut to the chase: Klitschkos, stop hiding behind your mother's skirt and get it on! Make $50-million or so combined and give us an undisputed heavyweight champ already!

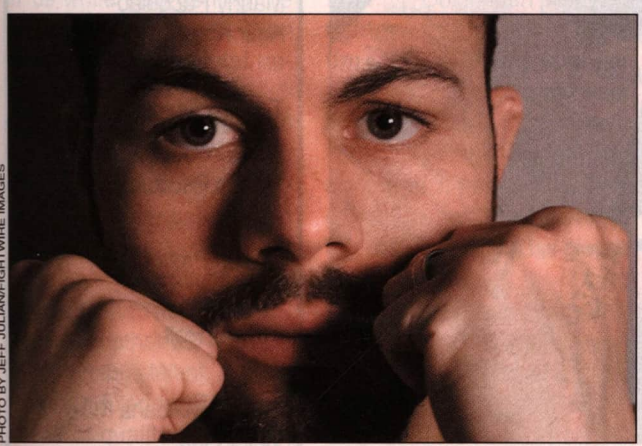


PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Kermit Cintron strikes a pose

WELTERWEIGHT

Last year in this space, we labeled **Floyd Mayweather** vs. **Shane Mosley** as our "Matchmaker's Dream." Now that the fight has come to fruition, it's our "State Of The Game Writer's Nightmare." The fight was scheduled for about a week after this magazine's due date, and much of the discussion in the 147-pound division hinges upon the result of the biggest boxing event of the first half of 2010. So we'll just have to do the best we can to discuss boxing's most talent-rich division without knowing exactly which way the wind will be blowing for the second half of the year.

Needless to say, the fight on everybody's mind will be **Manny Pacquiao** vs. the Mosley-Mayweather winner (which we called this year's "Matchmaker's Dream" since we didn't know yet who Pac-Man's dream dance partner would be). And it is those three fighters—the three best pound-for-pound fighters in the world, mind you—who make this division go 'round. But they're not *all* the welterweight class has to offer.

Andre Berto is charging up the rankings by cleaning out the *rest* of the division. He hasn't tangled with Pacquiao, Mayweather, or Mosley (which is probably a good thing for him), but the list of next-level guys he's beaten is impressive: **Cosme Rivera**, **David Estrada**, **Steve Forbes**, **Luis Collazo**, **Juan Urango**, and, most recently, **Carlos Quintana**. It's a who's who of ESPN headliners and HBO "B-sides."

Miguel Cotto is headed in a different direction—perhaps down the rankings after losing brutally to Pacquiao, and for now at least, into a different division to fight Yuri Foreman for a junior middle belt. One veteran who's definitely lost all positive momentum is **Joshua Clottey**, whose

WELTERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Shane Mosley

BEST BOXER
Floyd Mayweather

MOST PROTECTED
Daniele Petrucci

MOST AVOIDED
Antwone Smith

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Paul Nave

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Manny Pacquiao vs. Mayweather-Mosley winner

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Luis Collazo

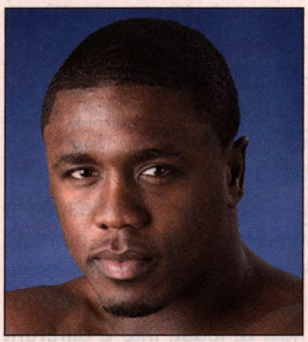
MOST FUN TO WATCH
Manny Pacquiao

ON THE WAY UP
Saul Alvarez

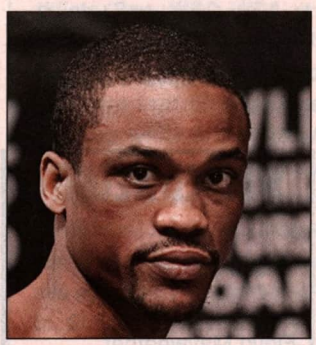
ON THE WAY DOWN
Carlos Quintana

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Andre Berto W 12 Luis Collazo

strategy against Pacquiao at Cowboys Stadium never advanced beyond "cover up and survive." On the other hand, **Luis Collazo** is gaining favor as the division's most dangerous second-tier veteran, and a planned June fight against brash, unbeaten **Selcuk Aydin** could prove interesting.



Andre Berto



Mike Jones

The bottom of the rankings is filled with foreign fighters with modest resumes—which, of course has not stopped some of them from claiming alphabet straps. This category includes Slovenian IBF titlist **Jan Zaveck**, Poland's **Rafal Jackiewicz** (whose main claim to fame is beating Zaveck), and the Ukraine's **Vyacheslav Senchenko**, who holds the WBA's non-"super" title.

Fortunately, there are some more familiar, intriguing fighters, just beyond the top-10 rankings. From *Contender* star **Alfonso Gomez** to exciting Argentine **Luis Carlos Abregu** to lingering ex-superstar **Zab Judah** to solid vets **Delvin Rodriguez** and **Randall Bailey** to up-and-comers **Mike Jones**, **Saul Alvarez**, **Antwone Smith**, and **Mike Alvarado**, this is a deep division.

Think About It: Let's crunch some pay-per-view numbers, comparing Pacquiao and Mayweather, the two biggest PPV attractions in boxing by far and men who will potentially be negotiating with each other again soon. Looking at their last five fights apiece, all of which headlined PPVs, Mayweather generated a total of 5.07 million buys and Pacquiao scored 4.28 million. Edge to Money May. However, Mayweather's total is skewed by the insane success of his fight with Oscar De La Hoya, which came before the economy crashed. So let's do what they do in some judged competitions and throw out the highest and lowest scores for each man. Pacquiao is left with 2.78 million buys over three fights, and Mayweather has sold 2.34 million over three fights. Edge to Pac-Man. Bottom line: Neither guy has much of a right to claim more than 50 percent of the pie, unless Mayweather has beaten Mosley by the time you read this and it *really* crushes expectations, selling over 2 million buys.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Pacquiao pounds away at reluctant Clottey

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

There have been various rumors circulating about HBO putting together some sort of 140-pound tournament—everything from a four-man event to a "Super Six" rip-off to an eight-man bracket. The rumors aren't true; HBO just happens to feature most of the best junior welterweights and is doing a solid job of matching them against each other. But even if it were true, four, six, or eight fighters wouldn't be enough. Year after year, somehow this division remains the deepest in boxing, and you could currently put together a 16-man

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Manny Pacquiao

BEST BOXER
Manny Pacquiao

MOST PROTECTED
Cesar Cuenca

MOST AVOIDED
Demetrius Hopkins

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Carlos Hernandez

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Manny Pacquiao-Amir Khan

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Timothy Bradley

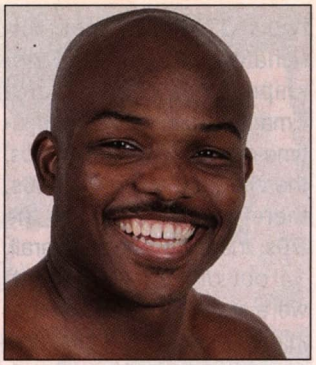
MOST FUN TO WATCH
Manny Pacquiao

ON THE WAY UP
Ruslan Provodnikov

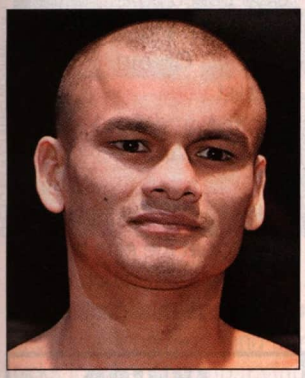
ON THE WAY DOWN
Kendall Holt

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Marcos Maidana KO 6 Victor Ortiz

Manny Pacquiao



Timothy Bradley



Marcos Maidana

Amir Khan

tournament and still have some noteworthy fighters fail to make the cut.

Sound like an exaggeration? Check this out:

The first tier begins with pound-for-pound king **Manny Pacquiao**, who is still technically the RING and lineal champion, though he might never fight at the weight again. **Timothy Bradley** has zoomed to RING cover-boy status, beating the likes of **Kendall Holt** and **Lamont Peterson** in '09 while also getting the better of **Nate Campbell** en route to a controversial no-contest. **Devon Alexander** is hot on Bradley's heels in terms of making the leap and arguably has more pound-for-pound potential, having kayoed **Junior Witter** and **Juan Urango** back-to-back at age 23. Britain's **Amir Khan** is another 23-year-old with enormous talent, an elite trainer in Freddie Roach, a streak of quality wins, and, unlike Bradley or Alexander, household-name status in his homeland. **Marcos Maidana** is a thrill-a-second Argentine banger who turns Victors into victims, having stopped both **Victor Ortiz** and **Victor Cayo**.

The next tier features quality veterans who are probably past their peaks to varying degrees but still are tough outs for almost anyone, guys like former RING champ **Ricky Hatton**, punchless but determined **Paulie Malignaggi**, Colombian pressure fighter **Juan Urango**, one-time Maidana conqueror **Andreas Kotelnik**, and former lightweight titlist Campbell. **Randall Bailey** probably comes in a little below that group, but he's a veteran who has the dynamite in his gloves to remain a factor.

The last major grouping is the up-and-comers who are either somewhat untested or have a loss to bounce back from, talents like Ortiz, Peterson, Cayo, **Mike Alvarado**, and **Lucas Matthysse**. And don't forget **Kaizer Mabuza**, who hit our radar screen with a recent stoppage of Holt.

Think About It: Longtime junior welter champ Kostya Tszyu will become eligible for the International Boxing Hall of Fame next year, but he isn't the most famous ex-fighter entering his first year of eligibility; that would be Mike Tyson. So here's an interesting question to ponder: Who will get more votes? Both Tszyu and Tyson are certainties to get voted in as members of the class of 2011, but the hunch here is that Tszyu's election will be pretty much unanimous, whereas some voters will deny ear-biter and convicted rapist Tyson on some sort of "principled" stand. So even though Tyson is 10 times more famous and was the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world, Tszyu will most likely be the number-one vote getter. (And on a side note, it'll be interesting to see if Dariusz Michalczewski gets in, making it a "modern" category class made up entirely of first-year eligibles.)

LIGHTWEIGHT

You know it was a weird year in the lightweight division when we saw both a talented lightweight masquerading as a welterweight and a talented welterweight masquerading as a lightweight. The former was world lightweight champ **Juan Manuel Marquez**, who cashed in on years of diligent service to play patsy to comebacking Floyd Mayweather in a welterweight fight he had no chance of winning. The latter was **Joan Guzman**, who somehow missed the 135-pound limit for his rematch with **Ali Funeka** by *nine pounds*, then won a close fight largely on the basis of the fact that his opponent starved himself to make weight while Guzman ate as he pleased.

This is a division that seemed poised for excitement heading into the April 2009 "Lightweight Lightning" pay-per-view; but half of the scheduled fights fell out, and the division couldn't get back on track afterward. Champ Marquez hasn't defended THE RING title in over a year (though he will in July in a rematch with **Juan Diaz**). Diaz hasn't fought in the division for more than a year either, instead making a fairly unsuccessful move to junior welter to split a pair of

LIGHTWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Michael Katsidis

BEST BOXER
Juan Manuel Marquez

MOST PROTECTED
Lenny Zappavigna

MOST AVOIDED
Miguel Acosta

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Freddie Norwood

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Juan Manuel Marquez-Michael Katsidis

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Ali Funeka

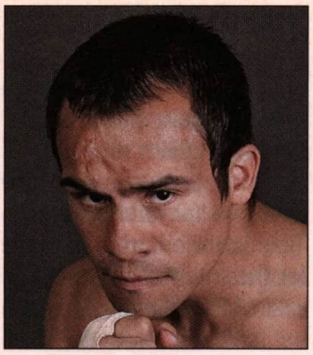
MOST FUN TO WATCH
Michael Katsidis

ON THE WAY UP
Adrien Broner

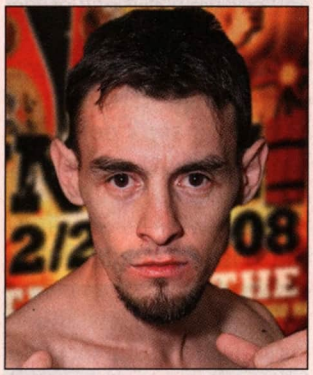
ON THE WAY DOWN
Javier Jauregui

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Juan Manuel Marquez KO 9 Juan Diaz

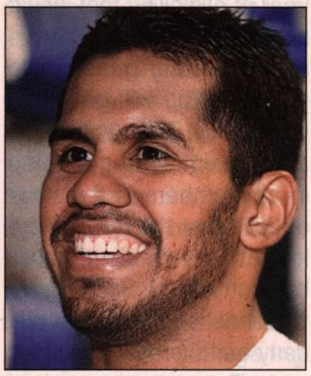
Michael Katsidis



Juan Manuel Marquez



Robert Guerrero



Juan Diaz

bouts with Paulie Malignaggi. Amir Khan was becoming a major player at 135 last year but he promptly moved up to 140. The first Funeka-Guzman decision was highly controversial. **Edwin Valero** made noise at 135, particularly with his domination of **Antonio DeMarco**, prior to his shocking suicide in April.

On the plus side, **Humberto Soto** has moved up from 130 pounds and **Robert Guerrero** is following suit. **Michael Katsidis** remains one of boxing's most exciting performers and has won three straight since back-to-back losses to Joel Casamayor and Diaz. South Africa's Funeka has established himself with American audiences as an awkward and honest fighter who can compete with anyone, even opponents who don't make weight. Two under-the-radar **Miguels**, **Vazquez** and **Acosta**, made minor splashes with upset wins against **Breidis Prescott** and **Urbano Antillon**, respectively. And **Anthony Peterson** and **Kevin Mitchell** still loom as promising young unbeatens.

Unfortunately, this is a division in which **Paulus Moses** somehow has an alphabet belt despite never having beaten anyone you've heard of. That's typical of today's sanctioning body nonsense—and symbolic of today's lightweight division, where things are just a little bit off.

Think About It: With Marquez and Diaz signed to square off again in a rematch to the '09 Fight of the Year, it got us wondering: How rare is a Fight of the Year that stands alone, where the two boxers involved only face each other once? Usually, a great fight leads to a sequel or *is* a sequel to a previous fight that was great. We looked back over the last four decades of RING Fights of the Year, and here's what we found: In the 2000s, only two FOTYs (Somsak Sithchatchawal-Mahyar Monshipour and Micky Ward-Emanuel Augustus) were one-time-only affairs; in the 1990s, there were three; in the '80s, there were four; and in the '70s, there were five. Overall, 14 out of 40 (35 percent) were stand-alones. But more interesting than the total was the pattern—one fewer each decade for four decades. More and more frequently, when a fight is a classic, they do it again. Who says it was better to be a fight fan in the old days?

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

What's the weakest division in boxing? If you were forced to answer without any time to think about it, you might blurt out, "heavyweight." But we took our time. We did the research. And junior lightweight is worse than heavyweight and has a heckuva case for being the least talented, least interesting division in all of boxing.

That's not to say *nothing* interesting happened in the past year. We got 2009's Upset of the Year, **Jorge Linares** losing in one round to **Juan Carlos Salgado**. (Downside: The 130-pounder with seemingly the highest ceiling, Linares, lost his luster.) Then we got **Takashi Uchiyama** scoring a memorable upset kayo over Salgado. (Downside: Another intriguing unbeaten lost his zero.) And we witnessed the continued development of **Robert "The Ghost" Guerrero**. (Downside: Guerrero is apparently moving up to lightweight now.)

Take Guerrero out of the equation, and you could argue nobody in this division is in the pound-for-pound top 50. You have the three South African alphabet title traders, **Mzonke Fana**, **Malcolm Klassen**, and **Cassius Baloyi**. Puerto Rico's **Roman Martinez** is exciting but hasn't yet faced an elite opponent. Uchiyama might emerge as the division's best fighter, but will American audiences ever get to see the Tokyo-based boxer compete? We've seen what **Jorge Solis** can do. Olympic bronze medalist **Vitali Tajbert** doesn't hit hard and isn't all that intriguing. And while **Jason Litzau** is a fun American TV fighter, his flaws tend to hold him back at the elite level.

There's not much else to say about this division, so

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Takashi Uchiyama

BEST BOXER
Robert Guerrero

MOST PROTECTED
Alejandro Sanabria

MOST AVOIDED
Malcolm Klassen

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Cesar Soto

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Robert Guerrero-Roman Martinez

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Jorge Linares

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Roman Martinez

ON THE WAY UP
Eloy Perez

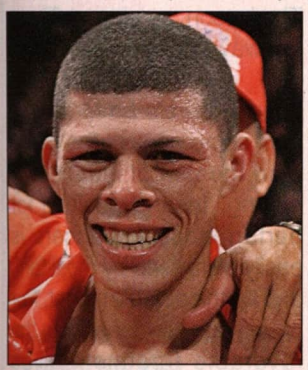
ON THE WAY DOWN
Tyrone Harris

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Roman Martinez KO 4 Nicky Cook

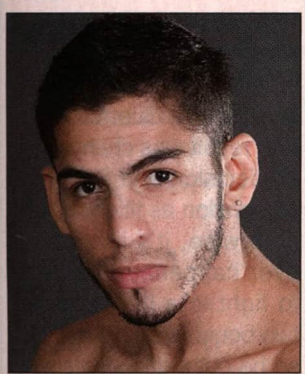
PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Uchiyama celebrates title-winning victory over Salgado

let's just close with a couple of clarifications regarding our picks for the accompanying sidebar. We went with Linares for "Deserves A Title Shot" for two reasons: First, no other non-titlist really deserves one either, and second, his lone loss, the quickie kayo to Salgado, has a hint of flukiness about it. And our pick for "Is He Still Around?", **Cesar Soto**, deserves at least a sentence or two. Would you believe he turned pro in 1986, making the Mexican almost a 25-year veteran of the sport? And even more incredible, he's only 38 years old!



Roman Martinez



Jorge Linares

Think About It: French 130-pound prospect **Guillaume Frenois** (which translates into English as "Willie Featherfists") has a record of 17-0 with just one knockout. So we were curious: How pathetic is the one boxer who got knocked out by a fighter who can't kayo anyone? Frenois' one knockout victim was **Nicolae Mitica**, whom Frenois starched in three rounds in his pro debut before rattling off 16-straight point wins. But here's the weird thing: Mitica's career record is 0-4, with three losses over the distance and only one (against Frenois) inside the distance. So the guy who got knocked out by the guy who doesn't knock anybody out has never been knocked out otherwise!

FEATHERWEIGHT

If the period from about 1997 (when Naseem Hamed invaded America) through 2004 (when Manny Pacquiao left the division) was a Golden Age for featherweights, then the next five years or so were a Rusty Age (sort of the opposite of "Golden," right?). The valley was low, particularly compared to the peak that preceded it. Juan Manuel Marquez did nothing memorable at the weight after his draw with Pacquiao, **Chris John** didn't venture beyond Indonesia or Japan until 2009, and the likes of Robert Guerrero and Jorge Linares passed through the division without leaving a legacy.

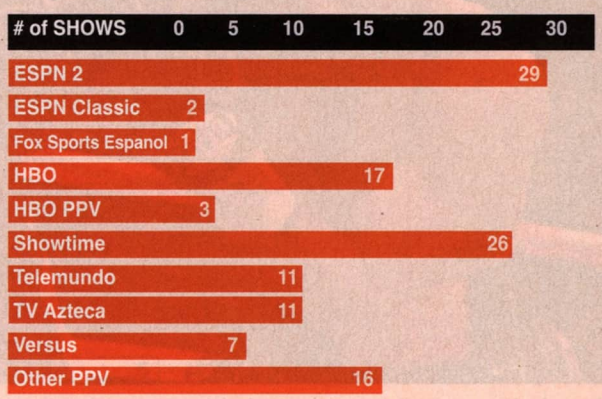
But just as quickly as the division went from scorching hot to ice cold, it has suddenly turned scorching hot again over the past several months. We're not saying the current crop will outshine the Hamed-Pacquiao-Marquez-Marco Antonio Barrera-Erik Morales era, but we also won't say such a period of prosperity is impossible.

The anchor of the division is still John, and the undefeated 30-year-old veteran of 12 title defenses took his show on the road in '09 for two entertaining fights against **Rocky Juarez**. Any hope for a RING title fight still goes through John.

And unlike the last couple of years, there's no shortage of worthy potential opponents for the Indonesian "Dragon," including four who have recently moved up from junior

BOXING ON TV

In 2009, for the first time since we started tracking the total number of boxing cards televised in the U.S., we experienced a significant drop-off. Typically, the numbers are fairly steady from one year to the next, but last year boxing felt the effects of a lagging economy and the related network budget cuts. As you'll recall, Telefutura got out of the boxing business at the end of '08, going from 49 Spanish-language fight cards one year to zero the next. And ESPN2 dropped its Wednesday Night Fights series. TV Azteca picked up a little of the slack, but not nearly enough to make up for the losses. Interestingly, the pay-per-view numbers were almost the same as the prior year—18 in '08, 19 in '09—but there was a dramatic shift within those numbers, as there were six fewer HBO PPVs in '09 and seven more independently produced PPVs. Ultimately, the total number of boxing shows slipped from 183 to 123. Here's a breakdown:



FEATHERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Yuriorkis Gamboa

BEST BOXER
Chris John

MOST PROTECTED
Chonlatarn Piriyapinyo

MOST AVOIDED
Celestino Caballero

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Guty Espadas Jr.

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Juan Manuel Lopez-
Yuriorkis Gamboa

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Celestino Caballero

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Israel Vazquez

ON THE WAY UP
Mikey Garcia

ON THE WAY DOWN
Hiroyuki Enoki

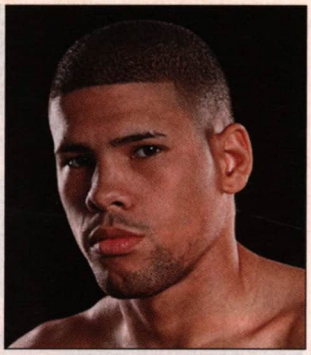
BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Chris John D 12 Rocky Juarez

featherweight. **Juan Manuel Lopez** is probably Puerto Rico's most popular current fighter, and he made a strong statement in his featherweight debut, knocking out **Steven Luevano** in the seventh round. **Celestino Caballero** ranked right with Lopez at junior feather the last couple of years and turned heads in April by dishing out a beating against **Daud Yordan** at 126 pounds. And veteran rivals **Israel Vazquez** and **Rafael Marquez**, both of whom are former RING champs at 122 and will renew acquaintances on May 22, with the winner becoming a marketable, big-name opponent for anyone at 126.

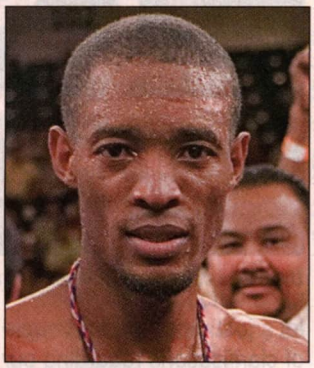
Perhaps the most significant new addition to the featherweight division is a man who's only been a pro for three years, Cuban expatriate **Yuriorkis Gamboa**. Even though he's already hit the floor four times in his career, Gamboa has some observers believing he's the best fighter at 126, particularly on the heels of his destructive display against **Rogers Mtagwa** in January. A Gamboa-Lopez showdown is in the works, though promotional company Top Rank wants to let it simmer a little longer, running the risk of letting the flame die down before the fight happens.

Elsewhere in the division, **Cristobal Cruz** is an inspiring journeyman turned alphabet beltholder; **Elio Rojas** and **Miguel "Mikey" Garcia** are talented youngsters; **Bernabe Concepcion** is a Pacquiao protégé who will never be Pacquiao but isn't half-bad; and **Daniel Ponce De Leon** will matter for as long as he can still punch like a middleweight.

One quick note: It might seem unusual that we labeled Caballero as "Deserves A Title Shot" in the accompanying sidebar after only one featherweight fight, but the problem is almost everyone else of note in the division either has a title, is scheduled to fight for a title, or recently lost a title. The lesson, as always: There are way too many titles.



Juan Manuel Lopez



Celestino Caballero

Think About It: In some sports, there's no more serious crime against the game than the use of steroids. In boxing, testing positive for performance enhancers is easily dismissed by most fans and by the establishment. For proof, look no further than the favorable treatment given to **Orlando Salido** since testing positive following what appeared to be a victory for the IBF featherweight title over Robert Guerrero in '06. The result was changed to a no-decision and Salido lost recognition as titleholder, but otherwise, it's like nothing ever happened. Salido got to fight in a title eliminator two bouts later. He won that, so he got a title shot against Cruz in '08. He lost that, but

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

John rocks Juarez en route to unanimous decision

was due for another shot against Cruz shortly after our press deadline—all without beating any noteworthy opponents in the last four years. Use steroids, and the boxing world gives you a slap on the wrist (or, in the cases of such popular stars as Shane Mosley and "Evan Fields," tries to pretend nothing ever happened).

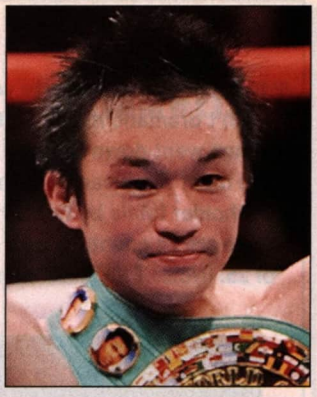
JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

If the featherweight division is full of intrigue thanks largely to the influx of quality junior feathers, then it follows that junior featherweight should be lacking in intrigue going forward, right? Unfortunately, yes. This is a highly international division, with contenders from nearly every continent, but there are no pound-for-pounders in the weight class anymore and no bouts that American fight fans particularly care about.

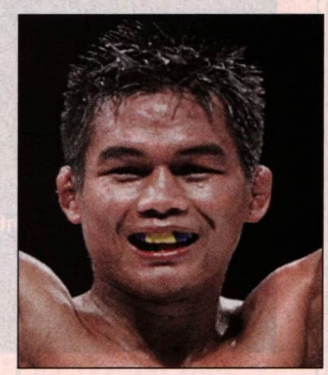
We will say this for the junior feathers: In 2009, the division that gave us four Fight of the Year winners in the 2000s again produced excellent candidates in Juan Manuel Lopez W 12 Rogers Mtagwa and **Bernard Dunne** KO 11 **Ricardo Cordoba**. Will that excitement continue with Lopez, Celestino Caballero, Israel Vazquez, and Rafael Marquez gone? That remains to be seen.

The two top dogs in the recently diluted division are Asian beltholders **Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym** of Thailand and **Toshiaki Nishioka** of Japan. The former claimed his belt by easily knocking out Dunne last September, and the latter tallied a sensational kayo win last May over **Jhonny Gonzalez**. Even though Poonsawat has the much better kayo percentage of the two, he's really a busy volume puncher, whereas Nishioka is streaking with seven knockouts in his last eight fights, so we've named Nishioka "Best Puncher" and Poonsawat "Best Boxer" in the accompanying sidebar.

Canada's **Steve Molitor** is probably glad the stars of the division departed; he got crushed by Caballero in '08 but is otherwise undefeated and recently re-claimed a vacant alphabet belt. Panama's Cordoba remains a solid, dangerous veteran despite being on the losing end of the Dunne thriller. **Jeffrey Mathebula** of South Africa took Caballero to a split decision in April '09, marking "The Mongoose" as a man nobody's begging to fight. Puerto Rican **Wilfredo Vazquez Jr.** has followed in his old man's footsteps and earned an alphabet strap by stopping previously undefeated **Marvin Sonsona** in February.



Toshiaki Nishioka



Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym

Also worth keeping an eye on: **Satoshi Hosono** of

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Toshiaki Nishioka

BEST BOXER
Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym

MOST PROTECTED
Ramon Maas

MOST AVOIDED
Jeffrey Mathebula

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Heriberto Ruiz

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym
-Toshiaki Nishioka

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Jeffrey Mathebula

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Antonio Escalante

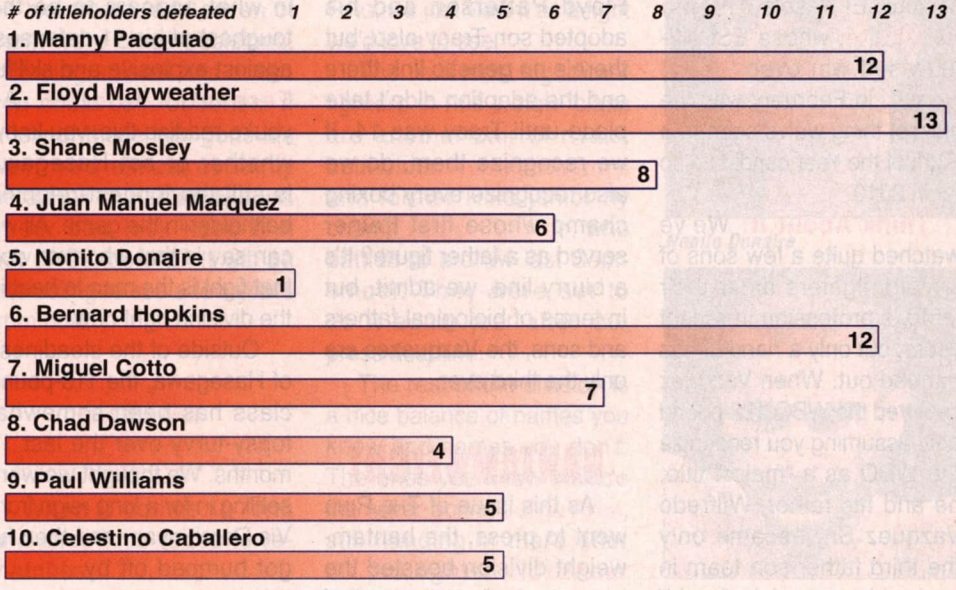
ON THE WAY UP
Rico Ramos

ON THE WAY DOWN
Al Seeger

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Bernard Dunne KO 11
Ricardo Cordoba

TITLISTS VS. TITLISTS

One of the ways to calculate a fighter's worth is to count the number of champions or titlists he's defeated. Here's how THE RING's pound-for-pound top 10 stack up:



THE CHAMPS AND TITLISTS BY COUNTRIES

This was one of those years where "the more things change" adage held true, as there wasn't dramatic movement in terms of the dispersal of belts among nations. The United States went down by one, England went up by one, Japan stayed exactly the same, etc. The most significant movement was that South Africa and Kazakhstan both increased their beltholder totals by two, while Venezuela and Mexico both decreased by two. And overall, there are 24 countries with at least one titlist, which is almost identical to last year's count of 25. (Note: This chart counts RING champions and WBC, WBA, and IBF titlists.)

12 COUNTRIES TIED WITH 1:

Argentina · Armenia · Belarus · Canada Dominican Republic · Haiti · Indonesia · Namibia Nicaragua · Puerto Rico · Romania · Slovenia

Japan, whose only loss came by majority decision against Poonsawat in January; European champ **Rendall Munroe** of England, another once-beaten boxer; and the only American-based 122-pounder of note, El Paso's **Antonio Escalante**, whose ESPN2-televised win over **Miguel Roman** in February was the closest thing we've seen to a Fight of the Year candidate so far in 2010.

Think About It: We've watched quite a few sons of famous fighters enter their father's profession in recent years, but only a handful has panned out. When Vazquez captured the WBO 122-pound belt, assuming you recognize the WBO as a "major" title, he and his father, Wilfredo Vazquez Sr., became only the third father-son team in boxing history to claim "world" titles. The first was Guty Espadas Sr. and Jr., and the second was Leon and Cory Spinks—who remain the only tandem to both hold legitimate lineal championships. Some people might recognize Floyd Patterson and his adopted son Tracy also, but there's no genetic link there and the adoption didn't take place until Tracy was 14. If we recognize them, do we also recognize every boxing champ whose first trainer served as a father figure? It's a blurry line, we admit, but in terms of biological fathers and sons, the Vazquezes are only the third ever.

BANTAMWEIGHT

As this issue of THE RING went to press, the bantamweight division boasted the longest-reigning titlist in all of boxing, **Hozumi Hasegawa**, who celebrated five years as beltholder on April 16. However, just a few days after our press deadline, the Japanese southpaw was putting everything on the line in what appears to be the toughest of his 11 defenses, against explosive and skillful **Fernando Montiel**. As you're reading this, you know whether or not Hasegawa is still the longest-reigning beltholder in the game. All we can say is that whoever won that fight is the man to beat in the division right now.

Outside of the steadiness of Hasegawa, the 118-pound class has been somewhat topsy-turvy over the last 12 months. We thought we were settling in for a long reign from Vic Darchinyan, and then he got bumped off by **Joseph "King Kong" Agbeko** and scurried back down to junior bantam. We then figured Agbeko was going to be tough to dethrone, but in his first defense, he got bounced by **Yonnhy Perez** (who had scored another minor upset in his previous fight, becoming the first person not named Rafael Marquez to defeat **Silence Mabuza**). Now Perez is lined up for a dangerous first defense against talented and undefeated **Abner Mares**, which is arguably just as intriguing a fight as Hasegawa-Montiel.

The other alphabet belt in the division is currently held by Panamanian **Anselmo Moreno**, and his reign hasn't been a breeze either. He won back-to-back split decisions in '09 over veterans **Wladimir**

BANTAMWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Fernando Montiel

BEST BOXER
Hozumi Hasegawa

MOST PROTECTED
Thangthong Kiattaweesuk

MOST AVOIDED
Michael Domingo

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Hidenobu Honda

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Fernando Montiel-Yonnhy Perez

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Joseph Agbeko

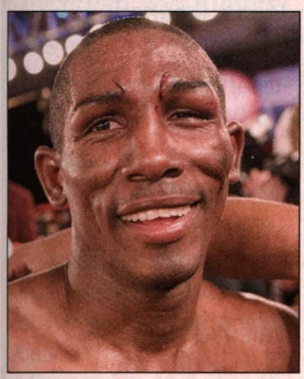
MOST FUN TO WATCH
Yonnhy Perez

ON THE WAY UP
Chris Avalos

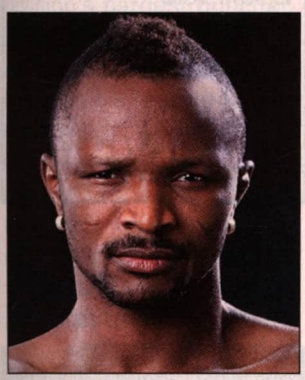
ON THE WAY DOWN
Silence Mabuza

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Yonnhy Perez W 12
Joseph Agbeko

Hozumi Hasegawa



Yonnhy Perez



Joseph Agbeko

Sidorenko and Mahyar Monshipour, and in his most recent fight, he needed a highly controversial split decision to beat Nehomar Cermeno. An immediate rematch has been ordered by the alphabet gang involved, and in this case, though we don't support alphabet groups forcing fights, the rematch is a logical call.

Bantamweight is a division deep with veterans, and seven of THE RING's top 10 are 29 years of age or older. There are also a few solid vets outside the top 10, like Eric Morel and Gerry Penalosa. And 30-year-old Michael Domingo is an interesting wild card, a guy with 14 losses who has now won eight straight, including upsets of Ratanachai Vorapin, Jose Navarro, and previously undefeated Miguel Roman.

Think About It: Following a year that saw bantamweight great Orlando Canizales inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, it seems timely to ask about one of the more borderline names of this era, Penalosa. Has the iron-willed Filipino put together a Hall of Fame career? He briefly held a 115-pound belt from 1997-'98, lost three split decisions and one razor-thin unanimous decision over the course of four title bouts from '98-'02, then had a rebirth in '07 (at age 34) by losing a disputed decision to Daniel Ponce De Leon (at 122 pounds) and knocking out Jhonny Gonzalez to claim a 118-pound belt. A brutal defeat to Juan Manuel Lopez (at 122) soon followed, but Penalosa bounced back and lost a highly controversial decision to Morel. This is a guy who has eight losses on his record, and seven of them were close decisions, including at least one or two you could call robberies. If a few of those had gone his way, he'd almost certainly be a Hall of Famer. But will sheer bad luck keep him out of Canastota? It will be interesting to see a few years from now.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

When it comes to long and circuitous roads to rematches, Nonito Donaire and Vic Darchinyan have nothing on Bernard Hopkins and Roy Jones. But it's still been a long and circuitous road since their July '07 bout in which Donaire scored both the Knockout and Upset of the Year, and as we went to press, it was anyone's guess whether the road was about to reach its end or not. The word was that the fight was agreed to in principle, probably for August, but that there were small details still to be worked out. And if Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather taught us anything, it's that there's no detail too small to prevent a fight.

Hopefully Donaire-Darchinyan II will happen, because it's by far the most significant and appealing fight that can be made at 115 pounds. Donaire moved up from flyweight two fights ago and Darchinyan moved back down from bantamweight two fights ago, and though some believe Donaire is just too talented and a bad style matchup for the Aussie-Armenian, others view this as a fight where Darchinyan has an excellent chance of gaining revenge. Here at THE RING, we just view it as a fight we'd love to see.

The next most significant fighters in this weight class are another pair of rivals, beltholder Nobuo Nashiro and former RING junior fly champ Hugo Cazares, who battled to a draw last September. They were set to do it again just after our press deadline.

The rest of the division is a nice balance of names you know and names you don't. The ones you know include the never-boring Jorge Arce, still hanging in there after 60 pro fights; Alexander Munoz, the two-time ex-titlist

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Vic Darchinyan

BEST BOXER
Nonito Donaire

MOST PROTECTED
Go Onaga

MOST AVOIDED
Malik Bouziane

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Isidro Garcia

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Nonito Donaire-
Vic Darchinyan II

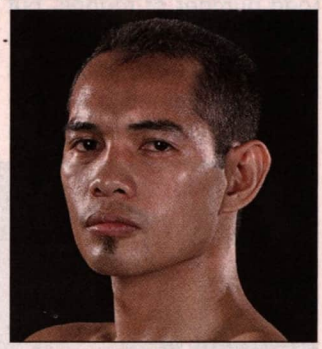
DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Nonito Donaire

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Jorge Arce

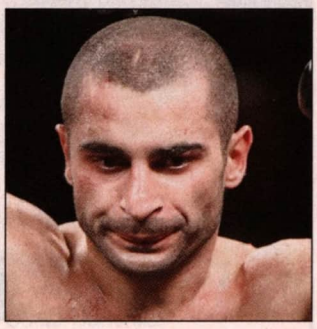
ON THE WAY UP
Drian Francisco

ON THE WAY DOWN
Pramuansak Posuwan

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Marvin Sonsona W 12
Jose Lopez



Nonito Donaire



Vic Darchinyan

who handed Nashiro his only defeat; and longtime flyweight beltholder **Omar Narvaez**, who's considering a move up to 115. The names you probably don't know include unbeaten South African **Simphiwe Nongqayi**, who easily outpointed Arce in '09 but then struggled to a draw with unknown **Malik Bouziane**; **Kohei Kono**, a Japanese fighter who lost a one-point split decision to Nashiro in '08; and **Drian Francisco**, an unbeaten Filipino who knocked out **Roberto Vasquez** last October.

Think About It: Donaire is undefeated in four-round fights, with a record of 4-0. He's undefeated in six-rounders with a 3-0 record. He's undefeated in eight-rounders at 7-0. He's undefeated in 10-rounders with a 1-0 mark. And he's undefeated in 12-rounders at 8-0. So how does he have a loss on his 23-1 record? Because he's winless in *five-rounders*. We don't see many bouts scheduled for an odd number of rounds, but Donaire had one in 2001, his second pro fight, against an unknown named **Rosendo Sanchez**. Donaire lost a close unanimous decision after five rounds (he claims he deserved to win), and hasn't lost since. He's 23-0 in fights scheduled for an even number of rounds, and 0-1 when scheduled for an odd number. Guess it's a good thing Donaire missed out on the era of 15-round fights.

FLYWEIGHT

It's a funny thing about RING champions: Sometimes you need to get the best fighter out of the division in order to crown one.

Last year at this time, **Nonito Donaire** was clearly the top flyweight in the world, but his people weren't going after major fights and weren't interested in taking him to Japan or Thailand to unify belts. And since you can't crown a RING champ without the number-one contender involved, the vacant title wasn't about to get filled. At least not until Donaire decided to move up to 115 pounds.

Then, seemingly without a warning, a RING title fight fell into our lap. Top-rated **Koki Kameda**, fresh off a solid win over **Daisuke Naito**, was signed to face second-rated

Daisuke Naito

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam, a veteran ex-titlist who'd remained busy and consistent, waiting for another opportunity to come along. And in a delicious twist, the 32-year-old underdog beat the previously unbeaten, trash-talking 23-year-old to rise again to the top of the division, claim the RING championship, and significantly improve his chances of landing in the Hall of Fame someday.

Now the division looks the way all divisions should in a perfect world: There's a single fighter on top we can call champion, and everyone beneath are his contenders. Since the fight was close, Kameda is worthy of a rematch, which would do huge business in Japan. Naito is still a capable fighter, and considering he and Pongsaklek have a bit of history—they've fought four times already, the most recent one ending in a draw—that's a marketable matchup. So is Pongsaklek against alphabet beltholder **Daiki Kameda**, who would be trying to avenge his older brother's loss. And if **Omar Narvaez**, who's had about as insignificant a 16-defense alphabet title reign as you can imagine, decides he wants to leave Argentina for the Far East and challenge himself, boxing could do a lot worse than him vs. Pongsaklek.

There are a couple of additional ex-titlists in the mix, as both **Takefumi Sakata** and **Denkaosan Kaovichit**

FLYWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Luis Concepcion

BEST BOXER
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam

MOST PROTECTED
Panomroonglek Kratingdaenggym

MOST AVOIDED
Jesus Jimenez

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Ratanapol Vorapin

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam-Koki Kameda II

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Koki Kameda

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Daisuke Naito

ON THE WAY UP
Zolani Tete

ON THE WAY DOWN
Omar Salado

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Daisuke Naito W 12 Xiong Zhao Zhong

PHOTO BY JUI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Nashiro tags Cazares with a left

WHAT'S IN, WHAT'S OUT

IN	OUT
"Bang! Bang! Bang!"	"Down goes Frazier!"
Jerry Jones	Roy Jones
The '04 U.S. Olympians	The '00 U.S. Olympians
Throwing punches	Joshua Clottey
Pat Russell	Laurence Cole
The heavyweight Haye	The heavyweight Hatton
Pacquiao and Kimmel	De La Hoya and Leno
Argentina's Sergio Martinez	Argentina's Sergio Medina
Nadya "Octomom" Suleman	Jose Sulaiman
Gary Shaw's Sweatsedos	Don King's bedazzled jean jackets

have proven their worth over the years. **Moruti Mthalane** is a quality fighter from South Africa whose only loss in the last five years came against Donaire. **Luis Concepcion** of Panama is probably the division's hardest puncher, though he has a few too many washed-up strawweight titlists on his resume for our taste. And **Zolani Tete** of South Africa and **Cesar Seda** of Puerto Rico are a pair of unbeatens worth keeping an eye on.

Oh, and if you want an American to root for, there aren't many, but **Rayonta Whitfield's** only loss came against Narvaez in '09 and the Augusta, Georgia, native has since bounced back with a pair of wins.

Think About It: Yes, Tokyo is a large city, and yes, many fighters in this weight range come from Asia, but it's still alarming how many of the top flyweights in the world hail specifically from the city of Tokyo. Looking at boxrec.com's ratings, four of the top five flyweights call Tokyo home, plus there are three more in the top 25 and five more in the top 50. Frankly, there is enough quality 112-pounders from Tokyo that it suddenly seems very unrealistic that Godzilla succeeded in terrorizing this city. Come on, you put a dozen top-50 flyweights together, and they ought to be able to wreak havoc on the big lizard's ankles.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

The most fun kind of matchup in boxing is zero-defense slugger vs. zero-defense slugger. But the most *intriguing* type of matchup is pure boxer vs. pure puncher. It's always fascinating to ponder which set of attributes will win out.

Well, there's no realistic matchup in all of boxing that matches a more pure boxer with a more pure puncher than a world junior flyweight championship fight between **Ivan Calderon** and **Giovanni Segura**. THE RING champ and his top contender are absolute opposites inside the ropes. Calderon couldn't crumple a piece of tin foil with his Sunday punch. Segura's technique calls to mind a cross between Ricardo Mayorga and a discus thrower. But they've both

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Wonjongkam attacks Kameda

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Giovanni Segura

BEST BOXER
Ivan Calderon

MOST PROTECTED
Jose Rodriguez

MOST AVOIDED
Edgar Sosa

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Bert Batawang

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Ivan Calderon-
Giovanni Segura

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Giovanni Segura

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Giovanni Segura

ON THE WAY UP
Johnriel Casimero

ON THE WAY DOWN
Munetsugu Kayo

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Giovanni Segura KO 4
Cesar Canchila

been successful. "Iron Boy" is undefeated after nine years as a pro, with five defenses of the 108-pound title. And Segura has one loss, which he avenged by TKO, and has made four defenses of his alphabet belt. Calderon vs. Segura is by no means a superfight. But for hardcore fans, it would be the best way to generate buzz about the junior flyweight division.

And the list of quality fighters in the weight class doesn't end with the top two. **Rodel Mayol** came up just short in two aborted bouts with Calderon, but is now a titlist after upsetting **Edgar Sosa** in the Mexican's 11th alphabet title defense. Sosa is certainly still in the picture, given that the kayo loss was partially the result of a head clash (see "Think About It" for more on Mayol's pesky noggin).

New Jersey-based Colombian **Carlos Tamara** came from out of nowhere to stop **Brian Viloria** in a dramatic finish in January, and a rematch would be interesting assuming Tamara gets past old warhorse **Luis Lazarte** in May. Veteran ex-titlists **Ulises Solis** and **Omar Nino** are definitely both still dangerous. Plus there are plenty of up-and-comers in the division, from **Juan Carlos Reveco** to **Johnriel Casimero** to **Milan Melindo** to **Hekkie Budler**. And Budler undoubtedly gets credit for the best nickname at 108 pounds: "The Hexecutioner." Sounds like a six-headed Bernard Hopkins (which would have to qualify as the most talkative mythical creature in history).

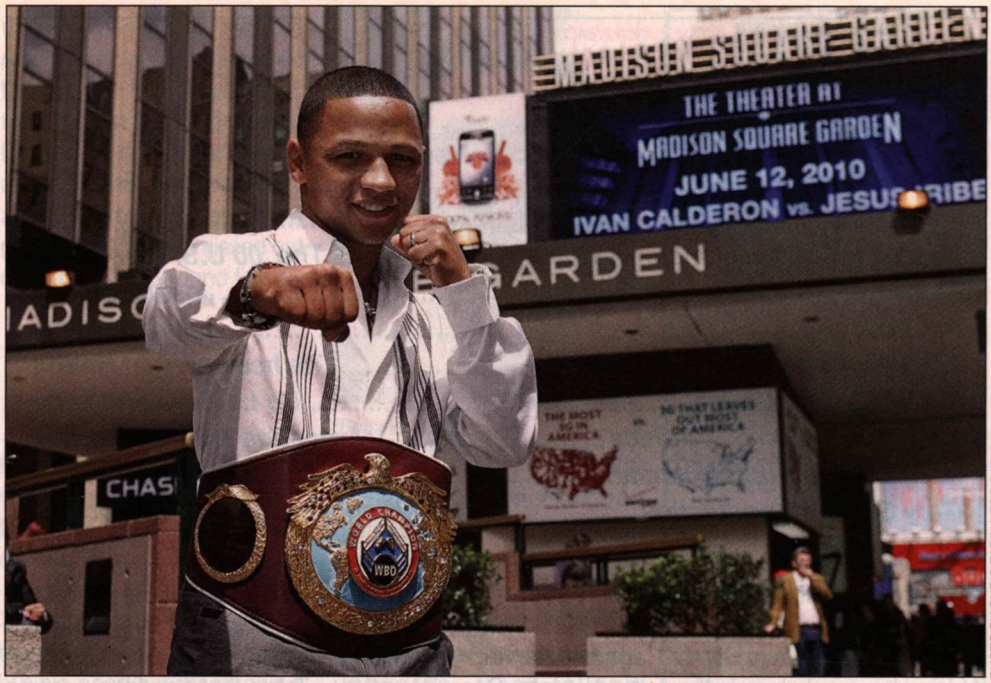


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Calderon outside Madison Square Garden

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Segura and Canchila pose prior to their first fight

Think About It: Remember when Mills Lane had that improbable streak in the '90s where he refereed one bizarre fight after another? He had Fan Man, the Oliver McCall meltdown, the Mike Tyson ear bite, the Henry Akinwande hugathon, and lastly the fight where he accidentally shoved Bernard Hopkins out of the ring. Well, Mayol is on a streak almost as bizarre and improbable. The Filipino beltholder has had four fights in a row with controversial endings involving accidental fouls: He had two back-to-back accidental-headbutt-induced technical decisions against Calderon, the knockout of Sosa where a clash of heads set up the finish, and then the technical draw against Nino where Mayol got flattened by a punch on the break. We're predicting Mayol hugs and then bites his crying opponent next time out, then bangs

heads with him and ends up with a no-contest.

STRAWWEIGHT

Strawweight was one of only two divisions as of press time (super middle being the other) in which the IBF, WBA, and WBC belts were all held by undefeated fighters. As has been discussed by many fans and experts, the notion of being undefeated has become overrated. Still, those zeroes at the end of the records look pretty, don't they? And in a division where there's not much to get excited about—at least not in America—having three titlists with perfect records is a start. The next step is getting them to put those perfect records on the line against each other.

STRAWWEIGHT

BEST PUNCHER
Roman Gonzalez

BEST BOXER
Oleydong Sithsamerchai

MOST PROTECTED
Denver Cuello

MOST AVOIDED
Yasutaka Koroki

IS HE STILL AROUND?
Muhammad Rachman

MATCHMAKER'S DREAM
Roman Gonzalez-Nkosinathi Joyi

DESERVES A TITLE SHOT
Juan Palacios

MOST FUN TO WATCH
Roman Gonzalez

ON THE WAY UP
Juan Hernandez

ON THE WAY DOWN
Florante Condes

BEST FIGHT IN 2009
Roman Gonzalez W 12 Francisco Rosas

Leading the way is Nicaragua's **Roman Gonzalez**, who has now made three successful title defenses, including a decision over **Katsunari Takayama** and a four-round kayo of **Ivan Meneses** in the past year. At just 22, Gonzalez has all the potential in the world to be this division's biggest star since Hall of Famer Ricardo Lopez, but his opposition since winning his belt from Yutaka Niida has been disappointing.

Thailand's **Oleydong Sithsamerchai** has done a better job of challenging himself in his five defenses since winning a belt in '07—maybe *too good* of a job. His last two defenses were both narrow escapes, a majority decision win over Gonzalez' fellow Managuan **Juan Palacios** and a unanimous decision over **Yasutaka Koroki**, where the margin of victory was four total points spread across three cards. Still, wins are wins, and there should be plenty more of them in the future of Oleydong, who is only 24 years old.

The newest addition to the parade of unbeaten beltholders is South Africa's **Nkosinathi Joyi**, who has scored impressive landslide decision wins in his last two bouts. First he shut out former titlist **Florante Condes** on two of the three cards in June '09, then he bagged a belt by prevailing by eight, 10, and 10 points over previously undefeated **Raul "Rayito" Garcia**. And though those wins came over the distance, the 27-year-old Joyi can pop, having scored knockouts in his previous seven fights in a row, including two first-rounders and three second-rounders.

The rest of the top 10 is made up primarily of the names of the defeated fighters mentioned above, like Garcia, Condes, Palacios, Takayama, and Koroki. Also worth a mention is Filipino **Donnie Nietes**, who holds the WBO strap and hasn't lost a fight since 2004.

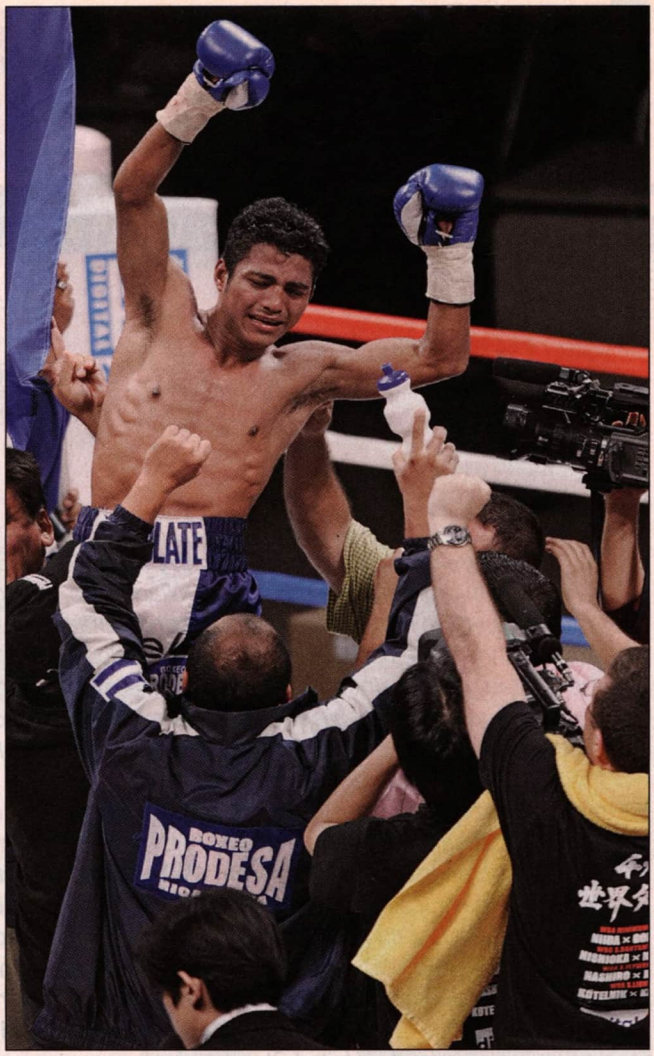


PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Roman Gonzalez is making fans notice strawweights

Think About It: We sometimes joke about how the difference between a strawweight and a junior flyweight is one Big Mac, and if you order fries and a shake with it you'll be a flyweight. After all, from the strawweight limit to the bantamweight limit, a span of five weight classes, the weight jump is only 13 pounds. So is it really that big of a deal to move among boxing's smaller divisions? Not for Mexico's **Manuel Vargas**. In consecutive fights in the last 12 months, Vargas lost a split decision to Nietes for a strawweight belt, weighing 105 pounds, then got stopped by Nonito Donaire in a junior bantamweight fight, weighing 114. And over the last eight years, Vargas has held and challenged for an assortment of regional titles at both flyweight and junior fly. The man knows his way around the scale. (But we'd recommend his handlers not steer him into any more fights with junior bantams who happen to reside on the pound-for-pound list, like Donaire.) ■

Wladimir Klitschko

"David Haye Is A Pussy"

To many American fight fans, Wladimir Klitschko remains an enigma. He's the heavyweight champion of the world but hasn't fought in the United States since February 2008. Moreover, his most recent fight was not televised in America.

"Dr. Steelhammer" currently finds himself in an ironic situation: He's proven so dominating against the current heavyweight crop that many American fans seem to have lost interest. Nevertheless, Wladimir is a huge attraction in Europe, drawing 60,000 and 50,000, respectively, to German soccer stadiums for his two most recent fights.

It's not simply that the United States can't find a challenger capable of giving him a competitive fight. Klitschko's scientific style of boxing does not provide the slam-bang action American audiences crave. That could change, however, if he fights WBA heavyweight titleholder David Haye, who tallied an impressive knockout of John Ruiz in early-April.

Two weeks after Klitschko, 54-3 (48), knocked out Eddie Chambers in the 12th round on March 20, THE RING Managing Editor Joseph Santoliquito spoke with the champ on a wide range of topics, including a possible match with Haye, his absence from U.S. television, his most painful moment in the ring, and much more.

Santoliquito reports: "Wladimir is a fascinating subject on so many different levels. Ten years ago, when he and his older brother, Vitali, first embarked on their pro careers both spoke through an interpreter. Now they speak English and live in the United States part of the year. Wladimir is engaging and much more candid than he has ever been. He has a self-deprecating sense of humor and possesses many of the core values that fans today embrace. He's the true definition of an old-school sportsman."

The Ring: Do you think American boxing fans appreciate you?

Wladimir Klitschko: When I walk down the street, I definitely feel that the fans are there for me. They ask to shake my hand and they'll ask to take a picture with me. There was this one guy who saw me and asked, "Dude, why don't you come out and fight more in America?" There is a certain interest in my brother Vitali and me. But it is something that's difficult to judge myself. I hope I'm appreciated. I really can't talk for myself about that. But I think the interest is there, and it's an awesome feeling. I know in the United States we have followers. I know that because every time I come back to the United States, going through customs, I get welcomed back in this country with, "Welcome back, champ."

I don't know if the fans in this country love the Klitschkos or hate the Klitschkos. I obviously want them to like me. Why shouldn't they? I need an audience. I love big crowds. Seeing big crowds makes you want to prove something. I think that's just part of society and being an athlete. You want to perform for people. To answer your question: Yes, I do think that the American fight fans appreciate me, the ones I meet anyway.

The Ring: What is your opinion of HBO President Ross Greenburg's comment that American fight fans can't tell the difference between you and your brother and that's why you're not well-known in American?

WK: *(Laughs)* I've heard some lines like that before when I was supposed to fight David Haye and he backed out. Two weeks later, Ruslan Chagaev stepped in the ring with me because David Haye bitched out. Yes, you heard me right, *bitched out.* It makes me laugh that people say they can't tell the difference between me and my brother. They knew it was me fighting Chagaev. Hey, I'm better looking than my brother *(laughs)*. How can people confuse us *(laughs)*?

Look, David Haye walks down the street and he looks like Lenny Kravitz *(laughs)*, and according to Ross Greenburg, people confuse me and my brother? There was this one fan that saw me and my brother together—and yes, he knew the difference *(laughs)*. He had our name tattooed onto his shoulders. He yelled at us both and then showed us "Klitschko" with the "Big K" and "Big O" tattoo on his shoulders.

The Ring: Do you think there is a disconnect between the Klitschkos and American fans because some of your recent fights were not shown on U.S. television?

WK: I don't know. I know some of my fights haven't been shown lately, including the Eddie Chambers fight. I hope we can find a solution to that so the fans can see our fights. I understand what is going on. I hear it all of the time, believe me

PHOTO BY MARCO PROSCH/GETTY IMAGES

(laughs). My style is boring; I jab, jab, jab, and then grab *(laughs)*. But can anyone ignore that 48 of my fights have ended in knockouts? I'm kind of getting blamed for the fight with Sultan Ibragimov in New York. I get the bad knock for that. I'm the one who has to take the blame, even if the guy doesn't want to fight. I don't think Lennox Lewis took the blame for his fight with David Tua. More recently, Manny Pacquiao had to chase [Joshua] Clottey in their fight in Texas, but Pacquiao didn't get blamed. But I get blamed. I'm the one. It's enough! I keep hearing it. I will keep doing what I need to win. That's what I did against Chambers.

The Ring: It sounds like the criticism bothers you a bit.

WK: To be honest, I actually like it when people say those things like I'm a safety-first fighter. Hey, I have a glass chin *(laughs)*. What can I do? Boxing is like any other sport; it is an art. It's an amazing sport. It's the art of boxing and people don't understand it. It's great to study an opponent and have a strategy for the fight.

The Ring: So you don't go into a fight with the intention of knocking out your opponents.

WK: No, I didn't say that. I'm just fighting at a different class than maybe others are fighting. Take Golden Gloves. There is a will to win. They're exciting fights because of the class of fighters. They're all the same level with not much experience. They're exciting, real exciting. But when you're a pro boxer for more than half of your life and doing it for a living, you get into a strategy and art. That is not to get hit and destroy your opponent. It's difficult to accomplish. I've done it and will continue to keep doing it. It's why I jab, jab, jab, jab, grab, and eventually knock a person out *(laughs)*. I do go into fights trying to knock guys out.

The Ring: Did you stop fighting in the United States because you're such a big draw in Europe?

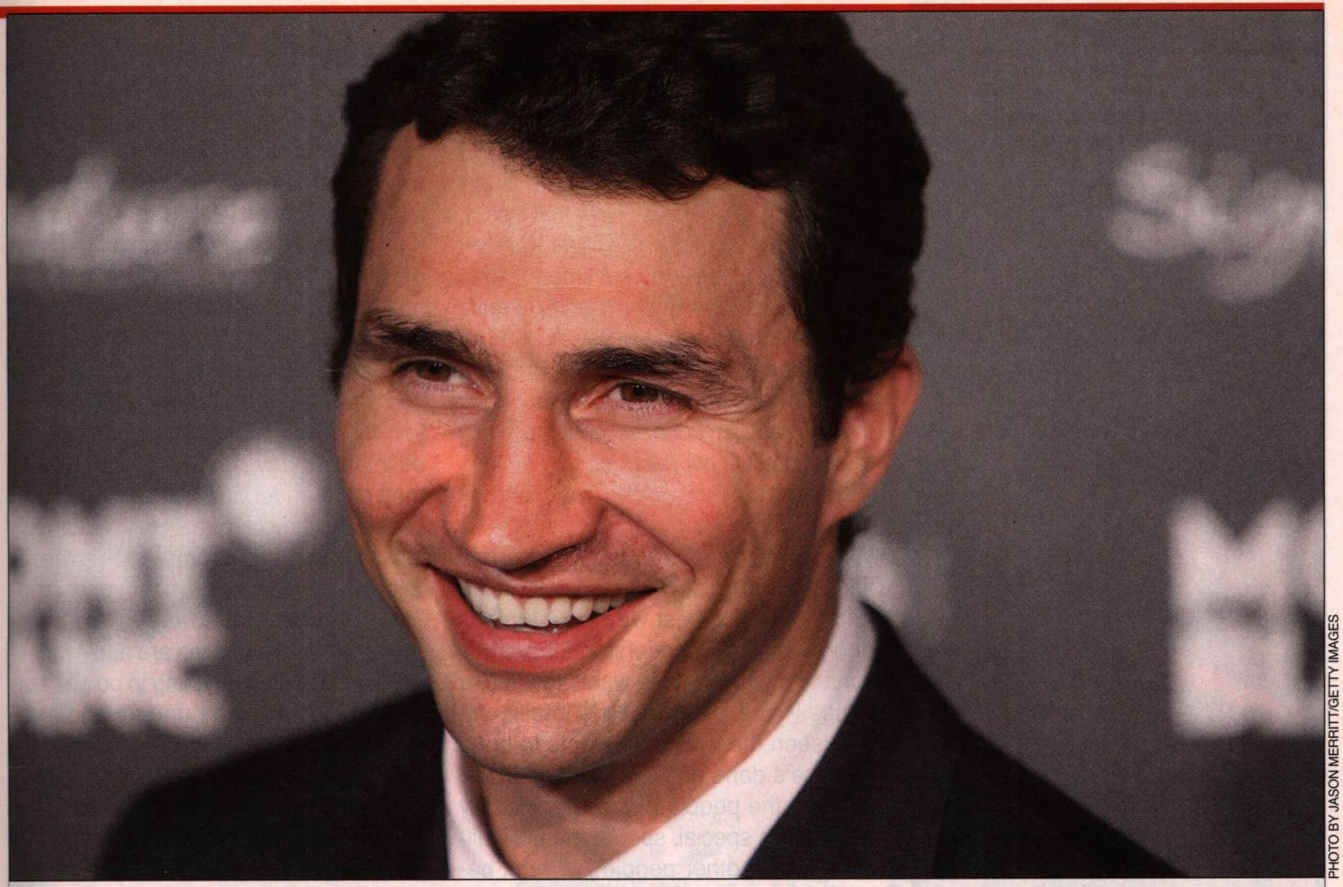
WK: It has to do with that. It's on the economical side. If you have a stadium filled with 50,000 or 60,000 people, why come to somewhere where you don't get that? We're number one in Europe, me and my brother. The currency is also something that's important. The dollar is very weak right now. If HBO or Showtime doesn't step in, there's no fight. Don't get me wrong; I love fighting in the States. It was very exciting to see Vitali's fight in Los Angeles against Chris Arreola in the Staples Center. I wish we could do more fights in the United States like that.

The Ring: Do you plan on ever fighting in the United States again?

WK: I do. I would prefer to fight in the United States. Max Schmeling told me and my brother "You have to fight in the United States." Our first promoter didn't want fights in the U.S. Me and Vitali squeezed his balls to get us fights in the U.S. I like fighting in the U.S. I live in the U.S. and I'm a resident in the U.S. [splitting time between Los Angeles and

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

There is no love lost between Wladimir and WBA heavyweight titleholder David Haye, who was scheduled to fight Wladimir when this photograph was taken in April 2009. After a lot of trash talk, Haye pulled out of the fight, but it now looks like the pair are destined to face each other sooner or later.



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"It makes me laugh that people say they can't tell the difference between me and my brother ... Hey, I'm better looking than my brother. How can people confuse us?"

Florida]. Look, half of Vitali's kids are American, born in the U.S. I feel bad our fights are not as big in the U.S. as they are in Europe. I wish we could change that. But in our last fight, we got almost 14 million viewers in just Germany.

The Ring: Who wants to fight David Haye more, you or your brother?

WK: I want to fight David more. Vitali wants to fight him as well. We've been talking about it over and over. Vitali is trying to convince me about the titles and the belts at stake. But this is personal to me. I understand David Haye's promoting himself; it's part of boxing. He beat someone I beat 10 years ago and he got in the ratings. David Haye bitched out against me, then bitched out against my brother. He's criticized everything me and my brother have done. Then I see his fight against Nicolay Valuev. He jumped around against Valuev. He didn't fight. I definitely want to fight David Haye. I don't like the way he has presented my relatives, well, my brother. There are certain lines you can't go below. He did. You should respect the opponent. He doesn't. If you talk, you have to back it up. He doesn't. He's a great promoter. As a fighter, I don't know *(laughs)*. I said I wanted to make Haye's face into a pizza. Now I want to make his face into a pepperoni pizza with salami and ketchup on it *(laughs)*.

The Ring: You're 34 now. How much longer do you see yourself boxing?

WK: I can't answer that *(laughs)*. No, no, I mean it. When I was 31, I felt good, great, top shape of my life. I thought that was it. I would start falling. Now I think I'm getting faster and smarter than when I was 31, and when I was 31, I thought I couldn't get better. I feel I'm even better than I was at 31. I think I'm going up and up and up. Last June, I felt in the best shape in my life against Chagaev, better shape than I was the year before. Then I had all these young sparring partners for the Chambers fight, and I felt great.

I heard how fast Eddie Chambers was. What kills speed? People always debate in boxing what kills speed. Anticipation kills speed. You study and do things the right way. If your opponent is faster, anticipation kills speed. I feel like I've improved. I keep telling myself: *I have to be fast. I have to be fast.* When I was in my 20s, I was horrible. I was really bad. I thought speed would win, but I found out that with speed and anticipation together, you're indestructible.

Same thing happened with my brother. Vitali went through all these surger-

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ies, but I never saw him as good as he was against Chris Arreola. I never saw him move like that. It's kind of scary.

People live longer and they last longer today. If you live healthy, don't take drugs, no alcohol, you can last. Now that I'm 34, I feel like I'm at my peak. I'll just work my way forward. I have no set time to retire. I hear David Haye say he's going to retire at 31—because he's a pussy. As long as I'm excited about the sport I'm in, I'll keep going. When I don't get excited anymore, that will be it. I'm done. When that's going to be, I don't know *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Do you have any political ambitions like Vitali?

WK: Inside of me, I wish that certain things could be changed in society. Unfortunately, the best way to get things done is politics. I understand the ambitions of my brother. He wants to change things in the Ukraine. He's intelligent; he's seen the world. He wants to bring what he's done and experienced in the world to the people of the Ukraine. My brother is a special, special man. It's difficult to find other people like him, because he wants to bring change. I do want to see the change and understand that with politics you can change things. I understand also that in politics the ways to change could take a lot of time. I understand it's the best way to accomplish things and to help people, but I don't see myself involved in politics.

The Ring: You are, however, involved in charity work.

WK: Yes, me and my brother do help people, especially children. I don't feel we should take the credit for that. We want to help people. I just want to do it my way. I don't want to influence the public opinion on anything. I just want to live my life and help. I love people. I love helping people. I don't want to promote myself as Mother Theresa. I just feel like I'm getting energy from people. It gives me a kick. It makes me addicted to it. It goes back to your question about politics and political ambitions. It's why I don't need politics. I know what I do for people. It's enough that there is one politician in the family *(laughs)*. We don't need two *(laughs)*.

The Ring: What do you think about Manny Pacquiao running for political office?

WK: I wish him good luck. It doesn't matter what country, all politicians are the same. I hope he brings change to his country. As a politician, Pacquiao had better get ready for a change. Actors and athletes are loved. Politicians are not. As an actor or athlete, you could have 100 percent of the people on your side. In politics, you have half for you and half against you. As a fighter, your fans love you, admire you; they're dying to shake your hands. But once you go into politics, you will stink *(laughs)*. People are affected in day-to-day life by what you do and they don't understand why government doesn't accomplish what they need. Your fans then turn against you. Look at Arnold Schwarzenegger and what happened to him. Everyone loved his movies, but some fans of his movies are against him. He can't decide everything in politics, but regular people don't understand that. Pacquiao is loved in the Philippines. His people look to him like a god. Is he going to have to be able to deal with making a difficult decision, which could turn his people against him? Will he be ready for that? He may be a god in the Philippines, but there's no difference in any country when it comes to politics.

The Ring: What are the differences between American fans and German fight fans?

WK: American fight fans let their emotions kick in quickly. German fans, you have to warm them up and do more to get them going. American fans are very likely to get upset. They detonate right away. German fans are more conservative with their emotions. They cheer and admire you, but German fans take more time to show it. In the United States, you'll see the emotions in the first round. When my brother fought with Arreola, even before the fight started, when Michael Buffer was announcing, people were going crazy. There was so much energy there. It was amazing. In Germany, fans will take the first four, five, six rounds before they let you know. I do have to say that both sides are good, but that's the difference.

The Ring: What do you think of Olympic-style drug testing in boxing?

WK: I don't have an issue with that. Sure, if you don't have any concerns,

Wladimir shows off his Ring magazine world championship belt following his knockout of Eddie Chambers. "This belt means a lot to me—it makes me the heavyweight champion of the world," said Wladimir.

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you take the tests. I take all of those tests and I have never failed. But someone showing up at your home, I don't know if I would like that too much. I understand there are certain dates and advance dates they test. I'm okay with that. Boxing is a sport where you have to be careful about the doping thing. We all have schedules and rules. I follow them. It's why I don't have any issues with Olympic-style drug testing. We have doping control in Germany. I get urine tests. I know I'm safe, because I don't take anything. I take the test. It's no big deal to me.

The Ring: What is your most memorable fight and why?

WK: I have to think about that, because there are a lot. One could be the time I won the WBO title when I fought Chris Byrd the first time. I stepped in and I was 24. I won a world title. Another could be my first main event at Madison Square Garden against Calvin Brock. My first fight at an outdoor stadium with 60,000 against Chagaev was also exciting. That was for THE RING title. That was a big deal to me, since Vitali was the last RING magazine champion. Before that I know Corrie Sanders held it for a little bit, but I don't want to talk about that *(laughs)*. ***(Editor's note: Sanders knocked out Wladimir in March 2003)*** And before that, Lennox Lewis had THE RING belt.

I was beating everyone, and I wanted that RING belt. For years, since Vitali retired in 2004, since that time, no one was holding the heavyweight world championship. I couldn't understand it. But I have it now. I'm proud of that. THE RING belt means a lot to me—it makes me the heavyweight champion of the world. It's not Vitali or Haye. I'm *the* guy, the guy who holds the belt. So I guess I would have to put the Chagaev victory up there. It's the fight that put me out there as the world champion, especially with me following my brother as the heavyweight world champion. It was cool, being brothers holding the same belt.

The Ring: What was your most satisfying fight and why?

WK: I don't have one, because I never had a satisfying fight—and I mean never. I've always looked back and it's always "could've, would've, should've" with me.

PHOTO COURTESY OF K2 PROMOTIONS

Vengeance is sweet. When Wladimir stopped former conqueror Lamon Brewster, he had his victim sign a business card on which there was a photo of Klitschko losing their first fight.

I'm very self-critical. I'm always looking ahead at what could make me satisfied. Nothing comes to my memory about being satisfying after a fight. I look back and I can't think of any fights, not yet anyway. Even if I knocked out David Haye in 10 seconds, it would not be satisfying. It would be too easy. What would be satisfying for me is fighting a guy who is fighting back, and I have to come back to beat him. That would be satisfying to me. Calvin Brock challenged me. He gave me some headbutts too *(laughs)*. That pissed me off. Then I was challenged. I want the perfect fight. But always I hesitate in the ring, that's my problem. I want the perfect fight. It's why I'm not satisfied yet. I think that when I retire, I can give you an answer. The most difficult fight is in front of me. I prepare myself for the worst.

The Ring: What's been your biggest disappointment in boxing?

WK: I still have problems with the first fight with Lamon Brewster. I wanted to become champion. It was a race between me and Vitali. I was first against Brewster. I was in amazing shape and I screwed up. You heard me right—I screwed up. That was really disappointing. I had Brewster in a lot of trouble. I don't want to talk about it *(laughs)*. That fight still brothers me.

Vitali and I had plans of becoming world champions together. After Corrie Sanders beat me, Vitali wanted to kick his ass for me. Hey, he's always going to be my big brother *(laughs)* defending little brother. Anyway, I put more pressure on Vitali by losing to Brewster. I felt guilty putting him in a tough position at that time. I still feel bad about it. It bothers me. But I learned what doesn't kill me makes me stronger.

The Ring: Did you feel like you hit the bottom when Brewster stopped you?

WK: I did. I wound up on the floor in boxing. I was at the bottom. I got criticized like I don't know what. My fight with DaVarryl Williamson wasn't any better. I ended up as a dead man walking. I was a loser. I had no chin, no balls, no anything. Around then, Vitali retired and I cleaned up my team. I never stopped believing in myself. I changed as a person. I learned a lot. It's why I have to tell this story:

Four weeks after the first Brewster fight, I saw him at lunch. I think it was in Los Angeles. I came over to Brewster to congratulate him on the fight. There was this other guy sitting with him, who I think was his manager. He asked me if I wanted Brewster's autograph. He showed me a business card and on it was a picture of me falling down. I took one of his cards. I took this business card and said to myself: *I will get the rematch.*

I kept the card and when the rematch came, I brought the card with me to the fight. After the fight, the first thing I did was run back to the locker room and grabbed that card and tried to find the manager. I ran into Brewster's dressing room looking for the manager and I asked Lamon to sign the card and took a picture of it. I have it on my phone. I'm thankful for Lamon and his manager for doing that *(laughs)*. I kept that card and that to me was my motivation. My final goal was to get the card signed.

The Ring: Alexander Povetkin is supposed to be your mandatory, but his trainer, Teddy Atlas, doesn't want him to fight you. Atlas says Povetkin isn't ready for you. What do you think about that?

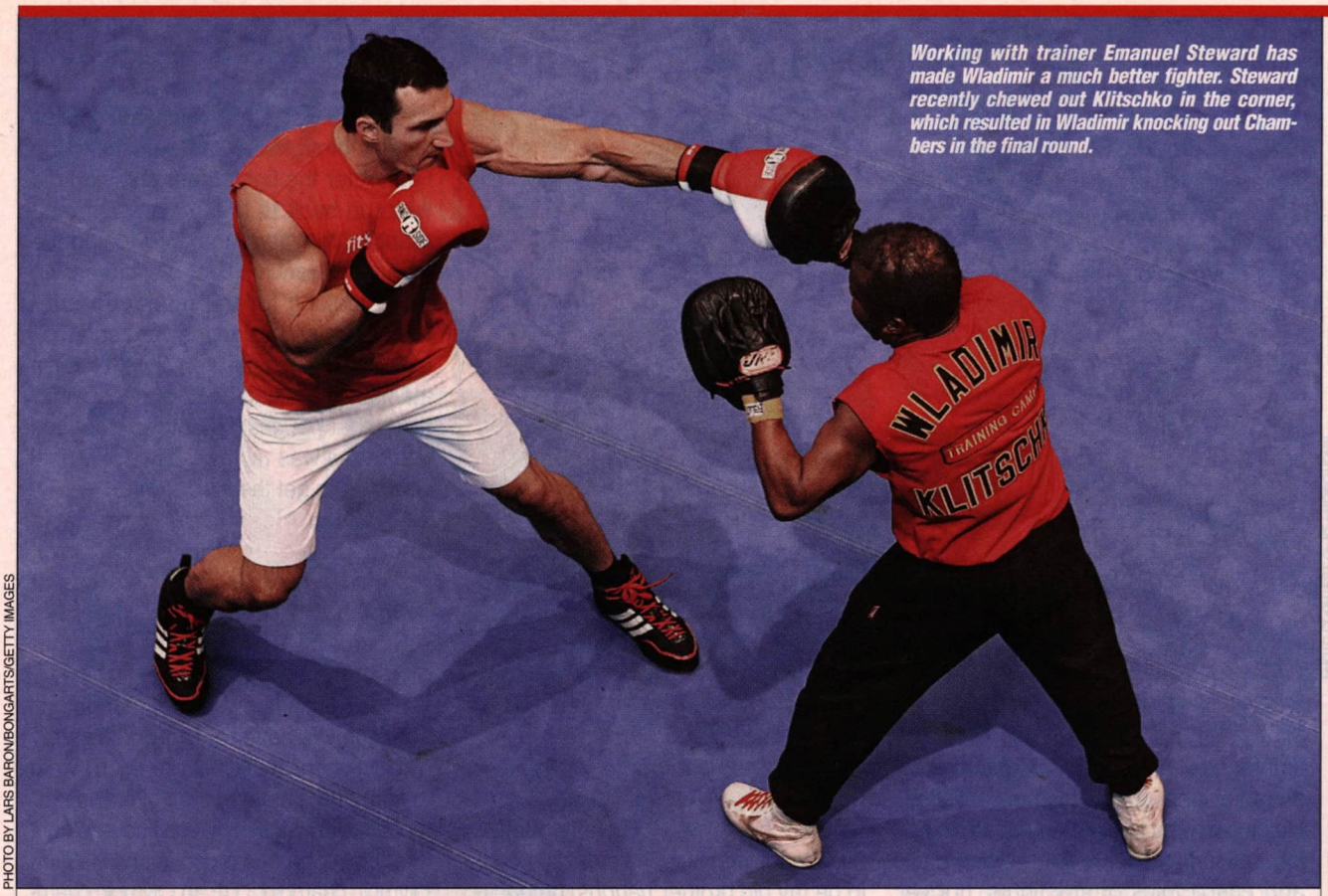
WK: Povetkin is my official mandatory. That's it. We have to do it and he's my official fight next. It's not like I don't want to fight him; I have to fight him. His promoter insists I fight him—so I have to fight him. I think he has a cool story. He's an Olympic champion. I'm an Olympic champion. You have one Olympic champion fighting another Olympic champion. Do I have a lot of choices with my opponents? Really, do I? It's not like the 1960s, 1970s. I don't have a lot of choices for me, not like that time, when you had Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, Ken Norton, I can go on and on. I have to fight Povetkin and he has to fight me.

The Ring: How did you react when Emanuel Steward told you to knock out Chambers?

WK: I was like "Dude, I don't like to be screamed at!" I was trying. Eddie was very fast. You have to be loose to knock someone out. I told Emanuel not to scream at me and to just relax. I felt bad for Eddie because he and Ibragimov gave up after the first five or six rounds. They fought like they didn't want to get knocked out. Ibragimov never lost eye contact with me. Eddie got a little tired. He wasn't as fresh. Lucky for me, I caught him with the right hand *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Why do you think Emanuel had to tell you that?

WK: I take my time. I'm not in a hurry. I know eventually what always happens



Working with trainer Emanuel Steward has made Wladimir a much better fighter. Steward recently chewed out Klitschko in the corner, which resulted in Wladimir knocking out Chambers in the final round.

PHOTO BY LARS BARON/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

with my opponents: They're getting hit with the jabs, their eyes are getting swollen, and they don't see clearly anymore. All of my fights are the same *(laughs)*. I'm winning the fight and not in a hurry. I do have to say that Manny did push me. That's the hesitation side of me. It comes from trying to be perfect. I have a great accuracy rate. In my opinion, I rarely miss. I'm not punching in defense and blocking things with my hands and stuff. I am attacking—just on my time, doing what I want to do.

The Ring: Why not open up your offense sooner?

WK: Eddie was very confident going into the fight, but he is a professional athlete who likes to dance. If I don't want to get hit, you will not catch me *(laughs)*. I have enough tricks not to get hit if I have to. It's not a street fighter or a bum I'm against. Eddie had experience and it's just that I have to give respect to him. Give some credit to my opponent here. You have to give credit.

The Ring: Do you think the heavyweight division is as bad as critics say?

WK: In Europe, what we think is totally opposite of what people in the U.S. think. You have 50,000, 60,000 people filling stadiums to see heavyweights fight. It's amazing how people view the heavyweight division. There is no smoke without fire. I have issues with some opponents because they're not marketable. It doesn't mean that they're bad. Brock was undefeated. Samuel Peter was also supposed to be good. They may not be well-known. But it doesn't mean they're bad.

Look at the fight between Lennox Lewis and Vitali. I remember Denzel Washington coming to see Vitali spar in Los Angeles. He thought Lennox was going to destroy him. He changed his attitude after he saw Vitali fight Lennox. Washington went to Vitali's dressing room and he said he had to give Vitali credit and respect for the fight. You have to give credit to opponents. I talk to Emanuel all the time about it and he tells me to keep kicking people's asses. Joe Louis had the same issue. Mike Tyson had the same issue. There are a lot of fighters in the past who went through the same thing. You have to just keep winning and wipe out everyone who is in the ring. I have to just keep doing my job. Emanuel tells me, and I listen to this man. I understand the frustration. Everyone is good in their times. I don't like talking about legacy—makes me sick about people looking back and thinking about things. I truly enjoy the process.

The Ring: After the Klitschko brothers retire, whom do you think will be the heir apparent to take over the heavyweight division?

WK: Emanuel asks me that all of the time. You have some amateurs who are coming up like Michael Hunter, who's from Las Vegas. These are talented fighters. Eddie Chambers was my sparring partner and wound up being my challenger. There are a lot of young kids coming up. They're fast and they're progressing. They're guys who want to work and they're sparring partners who are learning. They challenge you with a lot of will. I think Emanuel is right, that there will be some other young guys coming up challenging that will be champions. There will be someone after me and my brother retire. There will be others *(laughs)*. ■

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Jan. 2000: Fool's Gold? Trinidad May Have Tarnished Oscar's Image Forever! Color Pinup: Paulie Ayala. Interview: Tony Ayala Jr. Also: David Reid, Johnny Nelson.

Feb. 2000: Breakout 2000: Who's Going To Lead The Way In Y2K? Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Shane Mosley, Wise-Chavez, Iran Barkley.

March 2000: Mike Tyson: "I'm Tired Of This Crap!" So Are We, Mike! Color Pinup: Vernon Forrest. Interview: James Page. Also: Erik Morales & Naseem Hamed, Diego Corrales, women's boxing.

May 2000: Michael Grant vs. Lennox Lewis—25 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Paul Spadafora. Interview: Dan Goossen. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Johnny Tapia, southpaws.

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Aug. 2000: Mosley Prepares For Oscar: "It Will Be Like The First Round Of Hagler-Hearns." Color Pinup: Steve Johnston. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Vargas-Quartey, Thomas Hearns, Felix Trinidad, common sense vs. cowardice.

Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

Oct. 2000 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Floyd Mayweather. Interview: Stevie Johnston. Also: Clifford Etienne, overhyped heavyweights.

Nov. 2000: Sugar Rush! Mosley Achieves Superstardom At Oscar's Expense. Color Pinup: Lennox Lewis. Interview: Jay Larkin. Also: David Tua, Oleg Maskaev, Ben Tackie.

Dec. 2000: Mike Tyson vs. Lennox Lewis: 15 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Shane Mosley. Interview: Frank Maloney. Also: Oscar De La Hoya, Bronco McKart, our heroes' heroes.

[FULL-COLOR BEGINNING FEBRUARY 2001]

Feb. 2001: Fernando Vargas' Internal Battle: If He Can't Win It, He Can't Beat Trinidad. Interview: Evander Holyfield. Also: Derrick Gainer, Roy Jones, Naseem Hamed.

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Aug. 2002: Still Crazy After All These Years: Should Mike Tyson Be Allowed To Fight? Interview: Kostya Tszyu. Also: Barrera-Morales II preview, Ayala-Adams, Ricky Hatton.

Dec. 2002: Wladimir Klitschko: Would He Be Too Much For Lennox? Interview: Joe Calzaghe. Also: Barrera-Morales II, Evander Holyfield, Freddie Roach.

Winter 2002: A Realistic Look At Tyson's Comeback: He Can't Make History, But He Can Make Millions. Interview: Micky Ward. Also: Antonio Tarver, Antwun Echols, Acelino Freitas.

March 2003: Oscar De La Hoya—The War That Rages Within. Interview: Klitschko brothers. Also: Kassim Ouma, Eric Morel, holiday gifts.

May 2003: Danger Zone! Will Roy Jones Be Doomed By His Heavyweight Ego? Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Gatti-Ward II, Floyd Mayweather, Erik Morales.

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Nov. 2003: De La Hoya-Mosley II: Will Three Years And Seven Pounds Make A Difference? Interview: James Toney. Also: Michael Watson, Erik Morales, Jones-Holyfield head-to-head.

Winter 2003: *KO* Interview Arturo Gatti: "Kostya Tszyu Needs Me More Than I Need Him." Also: Mayorga-Forrest II, Zab Judah, Corrales-Casamayor preview, Joe Calzaghe.

Feb. 2004: Shane Mosley: A Second Chance At Superstardom. Interview: Bernard Hopkins. Also: Laila Ali, Scott LeDoux, retirement.

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Oct. 2004: Dr. Klitschko: The Perfect Band-Aid For The Heavyweight Division. Interview: Diego Corrales. Also: Monte Barrett, Cory Spinks, Vinny Paz & Sven Ottke.

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Oct. 2005: El Feroz With A Twist: Re-tooled Vargas Gets Defensive. Interview: Zab Judah. Also: Marco Antonio Barrera, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., *KO* at 25.

Feb. 2006: Can Hip Hop Revitalize Boxing? Interview: Erik Morales. Also: Zab Judah, Ricardo Mayorga, Arturo Gatti, Luis Collazo, Roman Karmazin.

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[Summary]

Heavyweights

David Haye KO 9 John Ruiz
(Retains WBA Title)
Tomasz Adamek W 12 Chris Arreola
Tony Thompson KO 4 Owen Beck
David Tua W 12 Friday Ahunanya
Audley Harrison KO 12 Michael Sprott
Juan Carlos Gomez KO 3 Alexey Mazikin
Juan Carlos Gomez W 8 Alexander Kahl
Denis Bakhtov KO 9 Steffen Kretschmann
Evander Holyfield KO 8 Francois Botha
Dominick Guinn KO 7 Terrell Nelson
Maurice Harris W 8 Robert Hawkins
Joey Abell KO 2 Josh Gutcher
Shannon Briggs KO 1 Rafael Pedro
Anton Nel KO 1 Pieter Cronje
Deontay Wilder KO 1 Ty Cobb
Tor Hamer W 6 Alexis Mejias
George Arias KO 2 Kleber Pereira
George Foreman KO 2 Dale Mitchell
George Foreman KO 1 Robert Vasquez

Cruiserweights

Danny Green KO 3 Manny Siaca
Daniel Ammann W 10 Walter Pupu'a
Henry Namauu KO 7 Rayford Johnson
Marino Goles KO 2 Ratko Draskovic
Carlos Negron KO 1 William Bailey
Arthur Williams W 6 Valente Tinajero

Light Heavyweights

Bernard Hopkins W 12 Roy Jones
Juergen Braehmer KO 5 Mariano Plotinsky
Dawid Kostecki W 12 Giulian Ilie
Ismayl Sillakh KO 2 Daniel Judah
Chris Henry KO 1 Hugo Garay
Tonny Averlant KO 6 Gianluca Tamburrini

Super Middleweights

Mikkel Kessler W 12 Carl Froch
(Wins WBC Title)
Lucian Bute KO 3 Edison Miranda
(Retains IBF Title)
Robert Stieglitz W 12 Eduard Gutknecht
Andre Dirrell W Disq. 11 Arthur Abraham
Kingsley Ikeke W 10 Zane Marks
Aaron Pryor Jr. KO 8 Kendall Gould
George Groves KO 6 Charles Adamu
Enrique Ornelas KO 4 Julius Fogle
David Lemieux KO 2 Walid Smichet
James McGirt KO 2 John Mackey
Daniel Jacobs KO 1 Jose Berrio

Middleweights

Sergio Martinez W 12 Kelly Pavlik
(Wins World/WBC Titles)
Sebastian Zbik W 12 Domenico Spada
Sergio Mora KO 7 Calvin Green
Darren Barker W 12 Affif Belghecham
Rodolfo Magno W 12 Andy Thiele
Derek Ennis W 10 Jose Gonzalez
Erislandy Lara W 10 Danny Perez
Andy Kolle W 10 Matt Vanda
Joe Greene W 8 Chris Gray
Fernando Guerrero KO 2 Michael Walker
Matt Korobov W 8 Joshua Snyder
Shawn Porter KO1 Raul Pinzon
Jorge Heiland KO 2 Joilson Morais Da Silva

Junior Middleweights

Alfredo Angulo KO 11 Joel Julio
Edgar Ruiz W 12 Paul Rodriguez
Sam Webb W 12 Anthony Small
Tyrone Tongia W 10 Andrew Gosden
Lenny Bottai W 10 Adriano Nicchi
Martin Concepcion W 10 Kevin Hammond
Ulises Lopez KO 9 Sergio Sanders
Ronald Hearns KO 1 Delray Raines
Shawn Porter KO 1 Raul Pinzon

Welterweights

Andre Berto KO 8 Carlos Quintana
(Retains WBC Title)
Jan Zaveck KO 12 Rodolfo Martinez
(Retains IBF Title)
Mike Alvarado KO 2 Lenin Arroyo
Joan Guzman W 12 Ali Funeka
Erik Morales W 12 Jose Alfaro
Lamont Peterson KO 7 Damian Fuller
Matthew Hatton W 12 Gianluca Branco
Delvin Rodriguez W 12 Mike Arnaoutis
Stefan Stevanovic W 10 Karlo Tabaghua
Demetrius Hopkins W 10 Jesse Feliciano
Favio Medina W 10 Jason Papillion
Mike Jones KO 5 Hector Munoz

Junior Welterweights

Marcos Maidana KO 6 Victor Cayo
Alberto Mosquera KO 4 Carlos Valdez
Ionut Ion KO 10 Andre Nascimento

Ajose Olusegun KO 8 Colin Lynes
Vincent Arroyo KO 8 Jeremy Bryan
Mauricio Herrera KO 6 Efren Hinojosa
Antonio Lozada Jr. KO 4 Henry Aurad
Frankie Gomez KO 3 Clayvonne Howard
Jorge Pimentel KO 2 Ernesto Rivera
Jhoan Perez KO 2 Azael Cosio
Holly Holm W 10 Chevelle Hallback

Lightweights

Reyes Sanchez W 12 Jesus Gonzalez
Henry Lundy W 10 Tyrese Hendrix
Diego Magdaleno W 10 Manuel Perez
Daiki Koide W 10 Akira Yamazaki
Ramon Ayala W 10 Javier Prieto
Zahir Raheem W 6 Roberto Valenzuela
Leo Martinez KO 8 Joel Torres
Vicente Escobedo KO 3 Carlos Urias
Ramon Ayala KO 3 Roberto Piseno
Al Sabaupan KO 3 Heri Andriyanto
Gabor Veto KO 3 Omari Ramadan

Junior Lightweights

Karim Chakim W 12 Antonio Bento
Jorge Linares W 10 Francisco Lorenzo
Jason Litzau Tech. Win 7 Rocky Juarez
Joksan Hernandez KO 10 Miguel Beltran Jr.
Azael Villegas KO 10 Alexis Salinas
Domingo Vilpan W 10 Adrian Flamenco
Alberto Garza KO 9 Hiroyuki Enoki
Carlos Cardenas KO 5 Rafael Urias
Nery Saguilan KO 4 Lizandro De Los Santos
Dante Jardon KO 3 David Rodela
Edgar Riovalle KO 2 Lizardo Moreno

PHOTO BY JACQUES DEMARTHON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Junior bantamweight Simphiwe Nongqayi drills Malik Bouziane with a left

Featherweights

Yuriorkis Gamboa W 12 Jonathan Victor Barros
Celestino Caballero W 12 Daud Yordan
Miguel Garcia KO 1 Tomas Villa
Eduardo Lazcano W 12 Antonio Meza
Marcel Meyerdiercks W 10 Emiliano Salvini
Lloyd Francisco W 10 Leonardo Doronio
Justin Savi KO 7 Cyril Thomas
Andreas Evensen KO 7 Peesaddaeng Kiatsakthanee
Rey Bautista KO 6 Saichon Sotornpitak
Viorel Simion KO 6 Victor Coronel

Junior Featherweights

Steve Molitor W 12 Takalani Ndlovu
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Rendall Munroe KO 9 Victor Terrazas
Veeraphol Sahaprom KO 2 Vicky Tahumil
Akifumi Shimoda W 12 Hiromasa Ohashi
Mauricio Munoz W 10 Miguel Caceres

Bantamweights

Anselmo Moreno W 12 Nehomar Cermeno
(Retains WBA Title)
Abner Mares KO 5 Felipe Almanza
Jorge Arce KO 7 Cecilio Santos
Cristian Mijares W 12 Francisco Arce
Chris Avalos KO 2 John Molina

Junior Bantamweights

Simphiwe Nongqayi D 12 Malik Bouziane
(Retains IBF Title)
Drian Francisco KO 5 Ricardo Nunez
Themba Joyi W 12 Zolile Mbityi
Isack Junior W 12 Rusalee Samor
Yodchanchai Patavikorngym KO 2 Little Roseman

Flyweights

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam W 12 Koki Kameda
(Wins World/WBC Titles)
Denkaosan Kaovichit Tech. Win 10 Rey Megrino
Luis Concepcion KO 4 Eric Ortiz
Giovanni Segura KO 4 Ronald Ramos
Ronald Barrera KO 9 Arturo Badillo

Junior Flyweights

Ulises Solis KO 6 Bert Batawang
Kazuto Ioka W 10 Heri Amol
Sammy Gutierrez KO 5 Javier Marquez
Tommy Seran W 12 Somsuknoi PK Studio

Strawweights

Nkosinathi Joyi W 12 Raul Garcia
(Wins IBF Title)
Oleydong Sithsamerchai W 12 Yasutaka Kuroki
(Retains WBC Title)
Momo Koseki W 10 Gun-Joo Shin

Evander Holyfield KO 8 Francois Botha

Las Vegas, Nevada: Before Holyfield, 220, Atlanta, Georgia, scored an eighth-round TKO, he seemed perplexed by Botha during this battle of long-gone heavyweights at the Thomas & Mack Center. Botha, 41, would clap his ears, jab him, and connect with enough one-twos to keep the 47-year-old Holyfield off balance and befuddled. Botha, 250, Newport Beach, California, by way of South Africa, didn't look in great shape, but he seemed on his way to a decision win. At the time of the stoppage, Holyfield was behind on two of the three judges' scorecards.

"He is a very good defensive fighter," Holyfield said after the fight. "He's a smart fighter too. His right hand had a lot of power, and he's also a very quick big man."

Holyfield, 43-10-2 (28), found his old competitive fire in the sixth, smashing body blows into Botha's ample gut. He continued this body attack during the seventh, and early in the eighth, he landed a short right to the jaw that sent Botha down to the canvas. Botha rose, but after Holyfield landed another volley of punches, referee Russell Mora (USA) stopped the bout at 0:55 of the eighth. Botha, 47-5-3 (28), said of Holyfield, "He capitalized on my mistakes."

It was Holyfield's first win since 2007. He's 5-3 since the New York State Athletic Commission lifted his boxing license six years ago. Although he's barely a shadow of his old self, he can still beat fighters such as Botha, which makes him think he still has a future.

"I gave myself a seven," Holyfield said. "I can get better. I'd been off a long time and I know I can get better."

Beating Botha earned Holyfield a title belt from an insignificant sanctioning body based in Australia. Believe it or not,

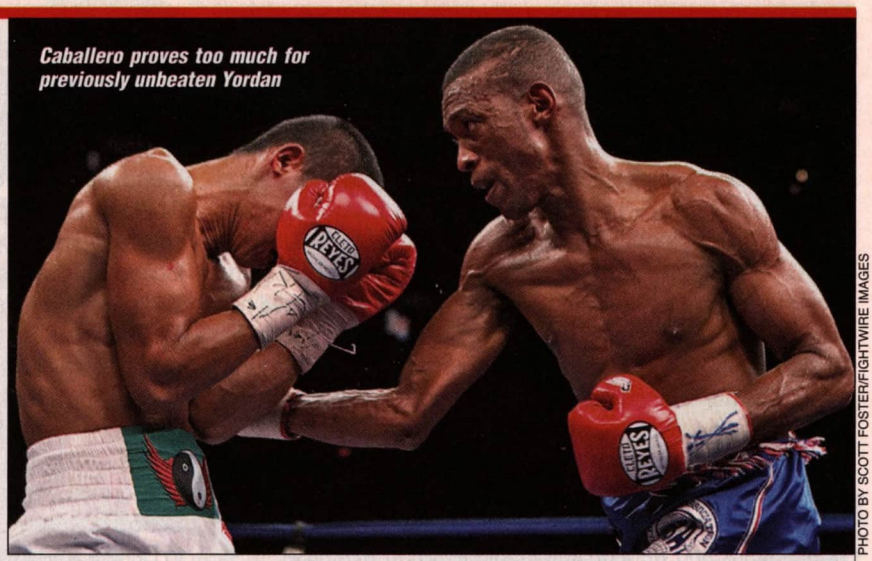
Holyfield comes from behind to beat Botha

PHOTO BY MARY ANN OWEN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Holyfield isn't the oldest heavyweight to win that group's belt. That distinction belongs to Joe Bugner, who was 48 when he beat Bonecrusher Smith for it in 1998. Holyfield's age, though, and not the obscure belt, was the main topic after the bout.

"When people talk, it does affect me," Holyfield told the postfight press gathering. "When someone calls you old and says you're senile, it does have an effect on me, even though I don't show it. The most important thing is my faith that I have in God; it allowed me to close my ears and keep pressing forward."

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Crown Boxing**
(4-10-10)



Caballero proves too much for previously unbeaten Yordan

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Celestino Caballero W 12 Daud Yordan

Sunrise, Florida: Caballero, 125¾, Panama City, Panama, dominated this bout from the beginning, using a variety of body punches and snappy jabs. Yordan, 125½, West Kalimantan, Indonesia, was totally outclassed by the older, more experienced Caballero. By the seventh round, the bout had taken on a monotonous rhythm, with Caballero throwing his bolo punches and Yordan simply walking forward, absorbing everything. Yordan landed the occasional left hook, but for the most part, he was simply a punching bag. It was the sort of beating that even a young fighter like Yordan will have trouble bouncing back from.

Caballero was making his first appearance at featherweight after being a solid performer at junior feather for many years.

[THE RING Fighter of the Month]

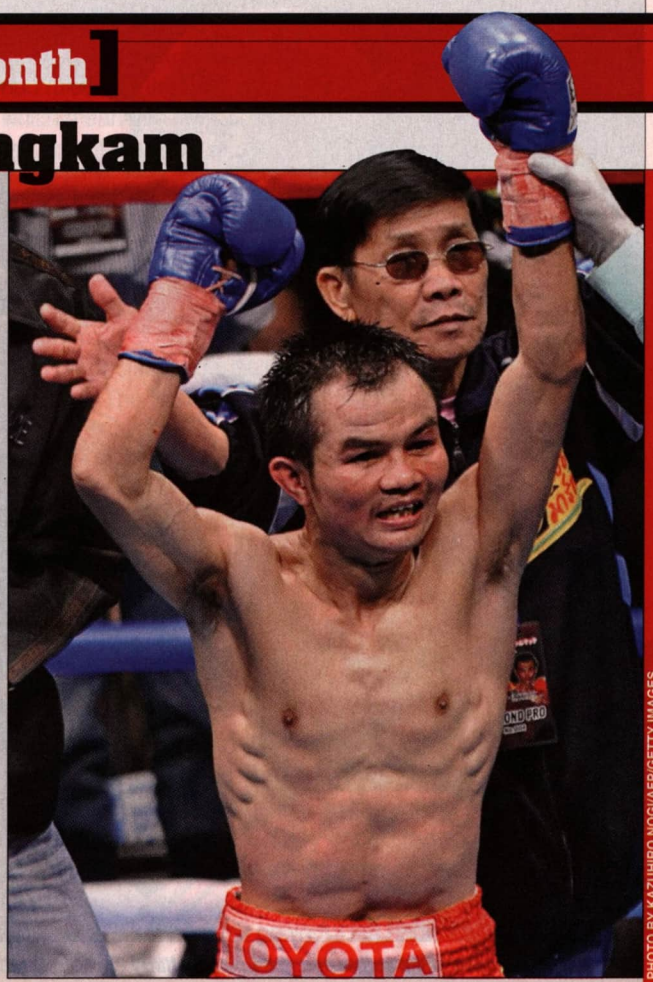
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam

Though the participants were only separated by nine years, the March matchup in Tokyo for THE RING's vacant flyweight title was a perfect new-school-versus-old-school clash. Japan's Koki Kameda, an unbeaten 23-year-old, brought a brash bad-boy image that's made him highly popular among Japan's younger fans. His opponent, Thai veteran Pongsaklek Wonjongkam, was the perfect rep for an older generation that has often been critical of Kameda for disrespecting the sport.

It had all the makings of a coronation for Kameda, given that the two men's careers seemed to be on opposite trajectories. But Wonjongkam turned back the clock with perhaps the best performance of his career.

The 32-year-old southpaw totally outboxed Kameda to capture a unanimous decision and the world flyweight title in Kameda's backyard. He might have sealed a spot in Canastota in the process. "[Kameda] had bad manners, but he had raw fighting spirit," Pongsaklek said afterward. "This time his manners were good, but he had no heart."

Wonjongkam is the first flyweight champion recognized by THE RING since the magazine announced its new championship policy in 2002. He is also the division's first true world champ in 37 years. The sanctioning bodies split the title after Salvatorre Burruni outpointed Pone Kingpetch in 1965. The linear progression remained intact until Thailand's Venice Borkorsor vacated to move up to bantamweight in 1973.



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At 122, he'd won the WBA and IBF belts and earned wins over such stars as Daniel Ponce De Leon, Steve Molitor, and Mauricio Pastrana. The previously unbeaten Yordan, though, wasn't much of a test at featherweight. Caballero started playing to the audience during the late rounds, not out of arrogance, but out of boredom. Yordan, 25-1 (19), was puffy around the eyes by fight's end, while Caballero, 34-2 (23), looked fresh and unscathed.

There were two moments of drama in the bout. Late in the second, Yordan walked into a right uppercut that knocked him on his backside. Right then, it was clear that he was in for a long night. The other moment occurred in the final round, when Caballero momentarily lost his balance and Yordan threw an array of punches to capitalize on the situation. He shoved Caballero into the ropes and worked him over for several seconds, showing some gameness even though he had no hope of winning. Caballero survived Yordan's last minute Hail Mary attack and went on to control the round with ease.

The Florida judges were unanimous in scoring the bout for Caballero. Tom Nardone and Rocky Young saw it 119-108, while Ged O'Connor scored it 120-107. The referee was Telis Assimenios (Florida).

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **DiBella Entertainment**
(4-10-10)

Andre Berto KO 8 Carlos Quintana

Sunrise, Florida: WBC welterweight titlist Berto got off to a slow start but eventually proved to be too quick and too strong for Quintana, stopping the southpaw in the eighth round. Referee Tommy Kimmons (USA) halted the bout as Quintana was trapped in a corner, pinned there by a nonstop bombardment of right hands from Berto. Quintana, 33, certainly looked like the loser; his right eye having been badly bruised and swollen almost shut. The time was 2:16.

Berto, 26, led 68-64 on all three cards heading into the eighth. It was his fourth successful defense.

The show took place at the BankAtlantic Center and was billed as "Fighting For Haiti," with a portion of the proceeds from tickets sold going to benefit victims of the recent earthquake. The crowd was small, with some estimates at 3,000, but Berto's promoter Lou DiBella said plenty after the bout, alluding to Berto's time away from the ring, his aborted bout with Shane Mosley, and the loss of family members to the disaster.

"You gotta give the kid some credit," DiBella told ESPN.com. "He really sucked it up. He was fully trained to fight Shane and then he went through a personal tragedy and then came back for this fight. I thought he showed a lot of character. Now we want Manny Pacquiao. Whenever Manny wants to fight us, we are ready."

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Berto belts Quintana into a corner during a finishing flurry

Juarez catches Litzau with a left

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Berto, THE RING's fifth-ranked welterweight, described the knockout as "pretty vicious" and hoped "it will open up some eyes."

Quintana, 27-3 (21), Moca, Puerto Rico, a former WBO titlist, got off to a good start and landed some solid shots early, but by the third, it seemed Quintana was running out of ideas. He was penalized a point for rabbit punching and, from then on, tried in vain to create some distance between himself and Berto's fast hands. Berto, 146½, seemed rusty—he hadn't fought in 11 months—but he gradually caught up to Quintana, 146½, and started to dominate. The fifth was a big round for Berto, who had finally found the range and was landing good sharp punches while Quintana did virtually nothing in return.

Berto, 26-0 (20), Winter Haven, Florida, suffered an injury to his left biceps during the bout, which might mean he'll need some time off to heal. His promoter hopes the recovery process won't be a lengthy one. "He's a young welterweight and needs to be active," said DiBella.

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **DiBella Entertainment**
(4-10-10)

Jason Litzau Tech. Dec. 7 Rocky Juarez

Las Vegas, Nevada: When Juarez won a silver medal at the 2000 Olympics, he looked like a sure bet for professional stardom. But despite three shots at the WBC 130-pound title and two cracks at the WBA featherweight belt, the Houston, Texas, fighter has come up empty-handed. His run of bad luck continued on the undercard of the Bernard Hopkins-Roy Jones rematch at the Mandalay Bay Event Center, where Litzau was awarded a questionable technical decision after seven rounds.

The fight was stopped on the advice of the ringside physician due to Litzau's cut and swollen left eye. Referee Jay Nady had ruled that the cut was the result of an accidental headbutt, which meant the fight would be decided by the scores through the end of the seventh round. Both judges Robert Hoyle and Dick Houck scored it 67-66 in Litzau's favor, while C. J. Ross also had Litzau ahead by a 68-65 margin. THE RING had it even at 67-67.

Juarez, 28-6-1 (20), complained bitterly, saying that the cut was caused by a punch and replays appeared to confirm his claim.

"The decision was bulls___!" said Juarez. "It was not a headbutt. The fight was taken away from me and I would like a rematch."

Litzau, 130, St, Paul, Minnesota, enjoyed a significant advantage in both height (5'10") and reach (73"), compared to Juarez, who is 5'5" with a 69" reach. Litzau, 130, used these advantages to stay on the outside, while Juarez, 129, advanced behind a high guard, trying to get within punching range of his beanpole opponent.

Nothing much happened the first two rounds, but Litzau began to punch more in the third and fourth, tagging Juarez with strafing shots from the outside. Juarez, a notoriously slow starter, got his left hook to the body working in the fifth and banged home six good ones to Litzau's midsection.

The best action came in the sixth—Juarez flurried first and then it was Litzau's turn. They ended the round toe-to-toe, swapping blows on fairly even terms as the crowd cheered them on.

Juarez, known for his powerful left hook, began to find the range for his right in the seventh and scored well. After the cut

opened underneath Litzau's left eye, Nady called time out and had the doctor inspect the wound. The fight was permitted to continue, but at the conclusion of the round, it was stopped and the scorecards tallied.

It was Litzau's fourth-straight victory since Robert Guerrero stopped him in a February 2008 bid to win the IBF featherweight title. Juarez, on the other hand, has not won a fight since he kayoed Jorge Barrios in September 2008. Considering the controversy over how the cut was caused and the closeness of the bout, a rematch is warranted.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Golden Boy, Square Ring**
(4-3-10)
Nigel Collins

Sergio Mora KO 7 Calvin Green

Las Vegas, Nevada: Mora, making his first start since losing the WBC 154-pound title to Vernon Forrest in September 2008, returned to action with an entertaining TKO of Green on the Hopkins-Jones undercard at Mandalay Bay.

Green, game but outgunned, went on the attack at the sound of the opening bell and landed a number of right hands and a couple of counter hooks, cutting Mora over his left eye in the process. Mora, 161, Los Angeles, California, began to fire back late in the round, but Green, 161, Baytown, Texas, just kept coming. Green continued his attack in the second, backed Mora into the ropes, and unloaded. Mora, who either blocked or ducked most of Green's salvo, spun off the ropes and was soon dishing out punishment. From that point on, Mora was in control.

Green, 21-5-1 (13), showed a lot of heart as he continued to march forward but began to take a lot of clean punches, especially in the fourth when he somehow survived a prolonged barrage from the sharp-shooting "Latin Snake."

Green's corner should have kept him on his stool after the end of the sixth round, but for some unfathomable reason sent their brave charge out again for the seventh. Mora had no choice but to continue pounding away on his overmatched opponent until referee Russell Mora (no relative; USA) stopped the fight at the 1:15 mark.

The 29-year-old Mora, 22-1-1 (6), is eager to make up for lost time: "He was a tough guy, but I got in there and I let my hands flow," Mora said. "I want to get back in there ASAP."

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Golden Boy, Square Ring**
(4-3-10)
Nigel Collins

Ismayl Sillakh KO 2 Daniel Judah

Las Vegas, Nevada: Sillakh, a Ukrainian now living in Simi Valley, California, impressed with his quick blowout of Judah on the Hopkins-Jones card. It was clear in the first round that 6'1" Sillakh was going to prove too big and too strong for the veteran southpaw to handle.

Judah, 175, Brooklyn, New York, was floored early in he second when Sillakh, 175, connected with a potent combination to the head. Judah beat the count of referee Vic Drakulich (USA) but collapsed moments later without absorbing another clean punch, forcing the referee to stop the scheduled 10-rounder just 49 seconds into the round.

Mora returns with TKO of Green

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

PHOTO BY RAT KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Sillakh impresses with TKO of Judah

Although he was born in Ukraine, Sillakh, whose father was from Sierra Leone, is nicknamed "The Black Russian." He is widely considered one of the finest light heavyweight prospects in the world and certainly doesn't lack confidence.

"I respect Bernard Hopkins, but if I fought him, I would beat him," said Sillakh after raising his pro record to 12-0 (11). "I am ready for a world title right now because I trained hard. I train every day, twice a day. I am ready. It is my time."

There is, of course, a world of difference between the 32-year-old Judah, 23-5-1 (13), and even the 45-year-old version of Hopkins. But there's little doubt that Sillakh is soon going to be a handful for any light heavyweight in the world.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Golden Boy, Square Ring**
(4-3-10)
Nigel Collins

Marcos Maidana KO 6 Victor Cayo

***Las Vegas, Nevada*:** By belting out an impressive kayo of Cayo, Argentine chin-checker Maidana might have given WBA junior welterweight titlist Amir Khan one more reason to delay the inevitable confrontation.

In a more-than-bargained-for war before a less-than-full house at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, Maidana defended the "interim" version of Khan's crown. Dropping Cayo at the end of round two, Maidana finished off the previously unbeaten Dominican halfway through the sixth on a doubleheader televised on HBO's *Boxing After Dark*.

It wasn't as easy as it sounds, though. Cayo, fighting for the first time in Vegas, as was Maidana, had promised to outbox the Dominican, but would not shy away from slugging it out should the opportunity present itself. Cayo, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, delivered on both counts. He not only outboxed Maidana, Buenos Aires, Argentina, for much of the fight, but also gave as he good as he got before he crash-landed on the canvas in round six.

Maidana, 140, gave away the first round, taking his time and applying pressure without punching much. Cayo, 140, boxed his way through the first and most of the second. When Maidana decided to pour it on during the second, Cayo met him halfway, slugging it out and outworking the Argentine—that is, until the final second.

As the bell rang, Maidana's left hook, already launched, sizzled its way to Cayo's noggin, dropping the Dominican to the mat for a flash knockdown. Cayo's corner shouted "foul," but referee Joe Cortez (USA) ruled it a legal knockdown.

Most expected the knockdown to spell the beginning of the end for the 25-year-old Cayo, but the Dominican came out strong in the third, unexpectedly taking the fight to Maidana, 26. Cayo had Maidana backing up until the end of the round, when the heavier hitter tried to steal the third with a flurry of shots.

The fight went back and forth in the fourth, with Maidana more aggressive in the first half, then Cayo landed his best shots yet. Cayo continued his momentum well into the fifth, stunning Maidana with head-spinning left hooks and a right hand. After weathering Cayo's attack, Maidana bounced back, throwing himself at Cayo in an attempt to win back the round.

In the sixth, Maidana made jelly out of "Mermelada" Cayo. Sensing his foe was starting to tire, Maidana tore into him, blasting the body until, halfway into the stanza, a right tore into Cayo's breadbasket, sending him to the floor, where he was counted out at the 1:38 mark.

"He was very tough and had a lot of movement," said Maidana, 28-1 (27). "I was looking for the knockout, but my corner told me to settle down."

Maidana distorts Cayo's face with a right

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Maidana admitted he'd heard the bell in the second when he scored his first knockdown of Cayo, 24-1 (15). "I heard it, but I threw my punch before that," he said. "I was in the moment. It wasn't intentional."

Maidana did not put a bull's-eye on his next opponent, but said he would take on "whoever is at 140."

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(3-27-10)
Chris Cozzone

Joan Guzman W 12 Ali Funeka

***Las Vegas, Nevada*:** Former titlist Guzman came in an astounding nine pounds heavy, forfeiting his chance to win the vacant IBF lightweight belt and losing a huge chunk of his purse in the process. Last year, Guzman might have had an early Christmas gift in his first clash with "Rush Hour" Funeka and escaped with a highly controversial draw.

But at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, there were very few (one judge included) who could deny that Guzman redeemed himself with a well-earned, clear-cut decision against the luckless Funeka, 135. Scoring a sixth-round knockdown, Guzman, 144, outhustled and outpunched his way past the slower, clumsier South African to earn a split-decision victory.

Funeka did absolutely nothing in round one, while Guzman outhustled his foe, going frequently to the body. Funeka was more aggressive in the second and was outworking his chunky-but-shorter opponent until Guzman figured out just how easy it was to potshot his beanpole adversary.

Guzman, 30-0-1 (17), Brooklyn, New York, via the Dominican Republic, might not have conditioned himself to be on target with his weight, but, in all other respects, he had done his homework. Setting up easy shots behind verbal jabs, Guzman, goading his man, danced and dropped bombs on the man whose big edge in height and reach no longer seemed to matter.

Funeka, 30-3-3 (25), started to let his hands go in the fourth, but Guzman's shots were more precise and harder. In the fifth, Funeka continually walked into his shots, shuffling forward like an automaton instead of the panther we'd seen in the first fight.

It was more of the same in round six until an overhand right cut the giant down to size. Funeka flopped to the canvas, but managed to beat the count. Guzman tried to seize the opportunity, rushing in for the finish. Funeka weathered the onslaught and started to throw back by the end of the round.

Funeka won his first definitive round in the seventh, backing Guzman into the ropes. Round eight was close, with Funeka the busier fighter while Guzman continued to land his bigger, but less frequent, shots.

Implored by his desperate corner, Funeka loaded up on left hooks in the ninth—Guzman still getting off his more precise overhand shots—and in the 10th the South African absorbed a lot of bodyshots. Funeka edged the 11th with a higher work rate, but Guzman nearly stole it with a flurry of rights at the end of the round. Confident he had the fight in the bank, Guzman avoided warfare in the 12th as a desperate Funeka chased him.

Funeka cracks Guzman with a left hook

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Despite Guzman's dominating performance, the judges saw a split verdict, scoring it 116-111 (Robert Hoyle, USA) and 114-113 (Steve Weisfeld, USA) for Guzman; while a third judge (Duane Ford, USA) had it for Funeka, 114-113. THE RING had it eight rounds to four, 116-111 with the knockdown, for Guzman. The referee was Robert Byrd (USA).

The 33-year-old Guzman apologized for not making weight and called out Marcos Maidana after the fight. "I'm moving up to 140 pounds and will fight anyone at that weight," said Guzman.

Funeka, $35,000 richer due to Guzman's failure at the scales, is now one loss poorer. "The weight had a lot do with him winning," said Funeka, who turned 32 the day after the fight. "It was like hitting a punching bag filled with sand."

Ironically, after the fight, Funeka tested positive for hydrochlorothiazide, a banned diuretic used to increase the rate of urination, which assists in losing weight.

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(3-27-10)
Chris Cozzone

Steve Molitor W 12 Takalani Ndlovu

Rama, Ontario: Molitor looked stunning when he outboxed South Africa's Ndlovu and impressively dispatched him in nine rounds in their first encounter in 2007, when the then-IBF junior bantamweight strapholder's career was seen to be cresting. The belief at the time was the technically accomplished Molitor was poised to storm the top echelon of the 122-pound division, but opinions quickly changed when he was summarily trounced in four rounds by Celestino Caballero 16 months later in a fight in which he was scarcely competitive.

The truth is Molitor, 121½, ranked fourth by THE RING, has never been the same fighter since the Caballero rout, and it showed in the rematch against Ndlovu, 121¼, this time for the vacant IBF trinket abandoned by Caballero, who moved north into the featherweight ranks. Far from a reprisal of their first match, Ndlovu, 30-5 (18), effectively pressed the action this time and nearly upset Canada's Molitor, 29, on his home turf at Casino Rama.

Molitor was barely touched in their first encounter, but Ndlovu, 32, reached him often in the rematch, effectively cutting off the ring and repeatedly landing jabs and lead rights that kept the scores close until the very end. It was unusual to see the sleekly moving southpaw Molitor tagged with such regularity.

While Molitor may have slowed a step, Ndlovu deserved credit for demonstrating looser hands and better spring in his legs. He stayed in front of Molitor from the very first round and actually showed the better jab over the opening rounds. And while Molitor bounced in and out of range, Ndlovu simply moved with him, choosing his moments to attack from behind a tight guard.

Surprisingly, it was Ndlovu who also did the better feinting, scoring well with shots to the head and combinations to the body that kept Molitor wary and on the move.

Molitor remained mobile and often slippery, answering with solid right hooks and quick one-twos to keep each round close. The fighters virtually traded rounds during the first six

heats, with a dearth of sustained action making for plenty of inconclusive rounds. Round seven provided the most entertainment as the fighters went toe-to-toe, but from that moment, Molitor seemed to find an improved rhythm that carried him through the second half of the fight. He reached Ndlovu with crisp lead lefts to the head and body while finding better consistency with his jab.

Still, Ndlovu remained in dogged pursuit, and the bout was a virtual stalemate going into the 11th. Molitor's faster hands were enough to garner him the hotly contested round, but it was his superior scoring that backed up Ndlovu in the 12th that sealed him the decision in what was ultimately a nip-and-tuck affair. THE RING concurred with judge Kelly Zolnierczyck (Canada), scoring 115-113 in favor of Molitor. Deon Dwarte (South Africa) saw it 117-111, and Andre Pasquier (France) scored 116-112 to give Molitor, now 32-1 (12), the unanimous decision. The referee was David Fields (USA).

"I know he was putting on a lot of pressure, but he wasn't landing clean," Molitor said. "I made him miss a lot. I thought I had the fight the whole way."

Molitor, whose last 10 fights have been at Rama, may end up going on the road for his next bout after it was rumored he will likely take on Jason Booth next in a defense scheduled for the United Kingdom.

Television: **TSN-Canada**
Promoter: **Orion Sports Management**
(3-27-10)

PHOTO BY ARANDO MARTIN/JAM MEDIA/GETTY IMAGES

Morales ends retirement with points win over Alfaro

Erik Morales W 12 Jose Alfaro

Monterrey, Mexico: After a retirement that lasted a little more than 2½ years, Mexican star Morales returned with a less-than-impressive unanimous decision win against Alfaro in a welterweight bout at La Explanada Del Palacio Municipal.

It was the first fight at welterweight for the 33-year-old Morales, 147, San Ysidro, California, via Mexico. The former three-division beltholder is on the comeback trail in hopes of becoming the first Mexican fighter to win a belt in four weight classes, as well as getting a fourth fight with Manny Pacquiao.

"El Terrible" didn't look particularly sharp at welterweight, however. In fact, he looked slow and a bit on the chunky side. Considering he won titles at junior featherweight, featherweight, and junior lightweight, Morales might want to consider toning up and dropping down a division or two as he continues his comeback.

A younger version of Morales likely would have had little difficulty with the 26-year-old Alfaro, 147, Nagarote, Nicaragua, who jumped up two classes for the fight. Alfaro, 23-5 (20), had been stopped three times in his career, including by lightweight contender Antonio DeMarco in his previous bout. Even so, Morales, 49-6 (34), never had Alfaro on the floor or in serious trouble.

Morales started off a bit tenaciously, using his longer reach to jab and box. Constantly moving forward, Alfaro tagged the head and body of the sluggish Morales frequently but lacked the power to do any real damage. After cruising through the first three rounds, Alfaro lifted his arms on his way back to the corner.

Realizing Alfaro wasn't much of a knockout threat, Morales began to pick up the pressure after the third. The action slowly became semi-vintage Morales as both men traded more frequently without giving up an inch, with the pace reaching a crescendo in a thrilling seventh. From there on, Alfaro decelerated, allowing Morales to capture the late rounds mostly on work rate and ring generalship.

In the final round, Alfaro pushed forward, winging power shots at the head and soft body of Morales in an attempt to spring an upset. Morales showed veteran poise in giving a bit of ground, easily dodging Alfaro's bombs, and then backing the underdog up with blasts of his own in the final minute of the fight.

Jose Juan Guerra (Mexico) scored it 117-111, while Miguel Acuna (USA) and David Mendoza (USA) each had it 116-112, all for Morales. The referee was Jon Schorle (USA).

Morales, who snapped a four-bout losing streak, is reportedly set to return July 24 in Mexico against an opponent to be named. He's aiming for four fights in 2010, as he attempts to work off the rust of the past 2½ years. Against Alfaro, he showed that he can still be fun to watch but also that he has a very long way to go if he is ever to recover the fighting form that once carried him to the top.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **KO Entertainment, Box Latino**
(3-27-10)

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam W 12 Koki Kameda

Tokyo, Japan: In one of the finest performances of his career, veteran Wonjongkam schooled Kameda in taking a majority decision and the vacant RING flyweight title at Ariake Colosseum.

Kameda, 23, entered with the WBC trinket and top spot in THE RING ratings following last November's convincing win against Daisuke Naito, the same fighter who ended Wonjongkam's WBC reign in July 2007 after 17 successful defenses. Wonjongkam had gone 9-0-1 since that loss to move into the number-two spot, with the draw coming in his fourth bout with Naito (Wonjongkam won the first two meetings).

Against Kameda, the 32-year-old Wonjongkam, 111½ , Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand, looked like a master craftsman at the height of his game. He was poised, fast, slick, and rarely took a step back. The hometown favorite Kameda, 112, Tokyo, Japan, spent most of the fight stubbornly trying to outwork Wonjongkam from the outside and complaining to referee Jose Guadalupe Garcia (Mexico) about headbutts.

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Wonjongkam drills Kameda en route to becoming world flyweight champion

"I have faith in my technique," Wonjongkam told the Japanese media afterward. "I have a lot of experience. I just told myself to keep calm and move forward and I got into my rhythm quickly."

The two southpaws spent the first round mostly feeling each other out, with Wonjongkam's slip game and aggressiveness seemingly enough to give him the round. Kameda, 22-1 (14), was on his feet between rounds, an idea that was abandoned by the middle of the fight.

Wonjongkam, 75-3-1 (39), was more aggressive in cutting off the ring in the second, when he landed enough lefts to take a close round. He dominated the third and fourth, when he pounded Kameda's body, repeatedly drove his opponent back, and made Kameda pay whenever the beltholder moved forward to attack. A flashy right uppercut 13 seconds before the end of the fourth sealed another outstanding round for the Thai.

The WBC's asinine open-scoring system revealed that Kameda was trailing 40-36 and 39-37 and was even 38-38 on the cards after four rounds. Sensing it was time for a Plan B, Kameda tried to close the distance gap at the start of the fifth. The result was a clash of heads that caused a nasty cut above the right eye of Kameda and triggered another misguided WBC rule, the one that automatically deducts a point from the uncut fighter, in this case Wonjongkam, whenever a headbutt results in a cut. The round did see some good exchanges and could have gone either way.

Wonjongkam's steady pressure often forced Kameda into a defensive shell in the sixth, when the Thai began finding a home for his right hook. Back on the outside, Kameda was driven into the ropes 1:10 into the seventh by a left to the chin that popped his head back. But in the final 15 seconds, Kameda used his legs to attack from angles and land a series of quick shots to steal the round. It was his best moment of the night.

An emboldened Kameda started the eighth round aggressively, but Wonjongkam answered with a stiff one-two that popped Kameda's head back. After eight, it was announced that Wonjongkam was leading 77-75 and 77-74 on two cards and actually trailing 76-75 on the other. When Wonjongkam slowed his pace a bit and failed to land cleanly, Kameda did some nice work on the inside and appeared to take a close ninth round.

Wonjongkam closed things out by taking the final three rounds, however. He controlled the 10th with a sharp jab and then picked up the aggression in dominating the 11th. Wonjongkam nearly dropped Kameda 23 seconds into the round with a three-punch combo that wobbled Kameda's legs. A dejected Kameda didn't bother to raise his gloves for the judges at the end of the round. Wonjongkam controlled the distance in the 12th, outworking Kameda as he did throughout the fight.

John Keane (England) scored it 116-112 and Max DeLuca (USA) saw it 115-112 for Wonjongkam, while Predrag Aleksic (Montenegro) had it an even 114-114. THE RING scored it 116-111 for Wonjongkam, who was reportedly considering a fifth meeting with Naito for his first title defense.

Promoter: **Miyata Promotions**

(3-27-10)

Oleydong Sithsamerchai W 12 Yasutaka Kuroki

Tokyo, Japan: On the Pongsaklek Wonjongkam-Koki Kameda undercard at Ariake Colosseum, the second-ranked Sithsamerchai did just enough to get past number-10 Kuroki in a matchup pitting two of THE RING's top-10 strawweights.

It was the fifth defense of the WBC belt for the 24-year-old Sithsamerchai, 103¾, Bangkok, Thailand, who barely got past Juan Palacios in taking a majority decision last November in his native county. Sithsamerchai got the unanimous verdict against Kuroki, 105, Tsuchiura, Japan, albeit just barely.

Kuroki, 23-4-1 (15), was the aggressor throughout, but Sithsamerchai, 34-0 (12), employed excellent defense and counterpunching to dominate the first half of the southpaw clash. Sithsamerchai then tired down the stretch as Kuroki's pressure began wearing the beltholder down.

Referee Bruce McTavish (Philippines) penalized Sithsamerchai one point for holding in the 10th. A Kuroki right hook floored the Thai in the 11th, and the final round saw Sithsamerchai holding on after absorbing a solid left hook. But, unable to score the knockout, Kuroki was too far behind on the cards after the first eight rounds to win on points.

Rey Danseco (Philippines) scored it 113-112, Predrag Aleksic (Montenegro) had it 114-113, and Jae Bong Kim (South Korea) saw it 114-112, all for Sithsamerchai.

"I simply slipped in the 11th round," the winner told the *Mainichi Daily News*. "By that time, I had racked up enough points. Kuroki is a good boxer."

With the loss, the 28-year-old Kuroki saw his 18-fight unbeaten streak come to an end. "Whether it be a small or big margin, a loss is still a loss," Kuroki told the *Mainichi Daily News*. "I wasn't relaxed. I tried to be. I really feel bad for all the people who have supported me."

Promoter: **Miyata Promotions**
(3-27-10)

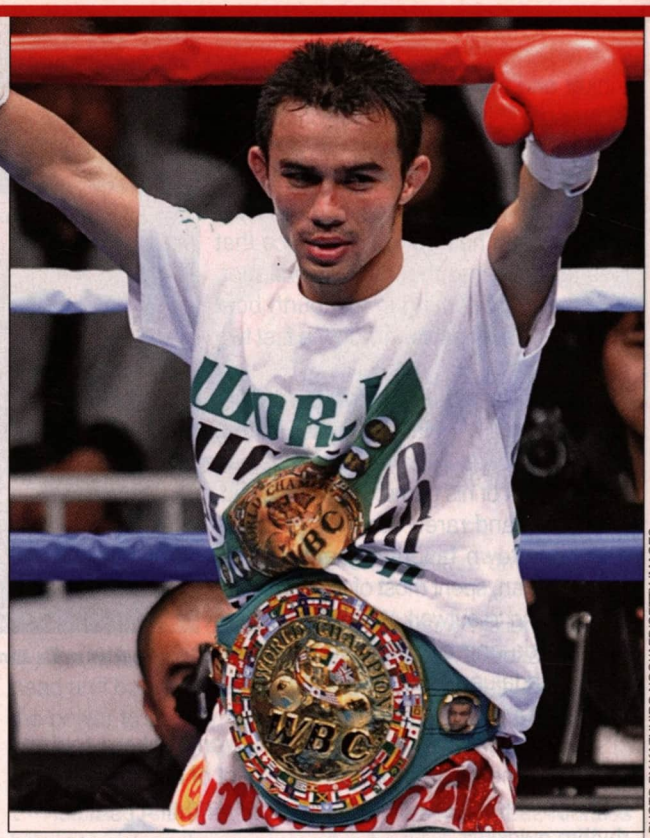

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Sithsamerchai celebrates victory over Kuroki

Ulises Solis KO 5 Bert Batawang

Acapulco, Mexico: Batawang blamed his 2007 ninth-round kayo loss to then-IBF beltholder Solis on a rib injury suffered early in the fight. Twenty-seven months later, Batawang was left with no excuses as Solis forced the veteran southpaw to retire on his stool after five rounds at the Plaza Pueblo Antiguo.

The win set up another title shot for Solis, 108, Guadalajara, Mexico, given that the bout was held as an eliminator for current IBF beltholder Carlos Tamara. Solis lost the belt in April 2009 via 11th-round knockout to Brian Viloria, who in turn lost it to Tamara in a surprising 12th-round kayo in January.

Batawang, 107½, Cebu City, Philippines, was moving forward in an effort to get inside from the opening bell, but Solis used his longer arms and superior hand speed to control the distance with his jabs and counters. The highlight of a close opening round was a pretty left uppercut by Solis, 30-2-2 (21), which momentarily stung Batawang, 45-15-3 (37). A right hand off the jab rocked Batawang, 38, back into the ropes with 1:15 remaining in the second, but Batawang survived with the help of an illegal hit off the break that drew a warning and a brief timeout from referee Wayne Kelly (USA).

Solis, 28, started the third by again backing Batawang up with a couple of hard rights upstairs. Solis followed up with a left hook that spun Batawang's head as "The Ninja" moved forward. Batawang, 38, recovered quickly and had some decent moments as an emboldened Solis willingly exchanged at close range. But Solis regained his distance by the end of the round, which he ended with a superb right hook to the ribs.

Increasingly targeting the body, Solis took command in the fourth with a perfectly placed counter right hook to the face that swept the feet out from under Batawang. The Filipino rose quickly and took a standing eight count from Kelly, and a patient Solis spent much of the remaining 50 seconds of the round pounding Batawang's midsection.

Solis turned up the pressure in the fifth, and his power shots to the head had Batawang retreating for much of the round. A left hook to the chin along the ropes in the final 10 seconds had Batawang wobbling around the ring and holding on. After the bell, Batawang told his corner he'd had enough.

It was the second-straight victory for Solis, who is ranked number six by THE RING at junior flyweight.

Television: **Fox Sports Net/Fox Sports en Espanol**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(3-27-10)

Anselmo Moreno W 12 Nehomar Cermeno

La Guaira, Venezuela: Moreno, THE RING's second-ranked bantamweight, handed sixth-rated Cermeno his first professional loss, albeit controversially, as the southpaw pulled out a split decision at the Polideportivo Jose Maria Vargas.

The estimated 5,000 fans on hand were largely behind Cermeno, 118, Panama City, Panama, via Venezuela. They booed the decision, which gave Moreno, 118, San Miguelito, Panama, his sixth defense of the WBA belt. Cermeno had held the WBA's "interim" belt since beating Christian Mijares in March 2009.

Cermeno, 19-1 (11), got off to a strong start. The shorter challenger took the first three rounds with effective counterpunching as Moreno, 29-1 (10), struggled to solve his style.

Moreno came back with a strong fourth round, when he repeatedly caught Cermeno charging forward. But Cermeno's aggression and vicious body attack gave him the edge in the next three rounds.

Moreno, 24, came on late. Despite the wear and tear on his body, he finally established his range with his southpaw jab and foot work. Still targeting the body, Cermeno, 30, was penalized one point by referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) in the 11th for low blows. Both fighters went for the knockout in a thrilling final round that saw blistering exchanges until the final bell.

Nelson Vazquez (Puerto Rico) scored it 115-112 and Uriel Aguilera (Colombia) had it 114-113 for Moreno, while Levi Martinez (USA) gave it to Cermeno by a 115-112 tally. A week and a half later, after reviewing the bout, the WBA ordered an immediate rematch. The two camps had until May 1 to reach an agreement.

"I am the winner, although I congratulate Anselmo Moreno because he gave a great battle," Cermeno told BoxingScene.com. "I feel that I did my job. I followed the order of my corner, and worked the strategy. Again, I am the winner, but the judges did not see it that way. Yes, Moreno accepted a rematch, but that is now in the hands of my manager."

"I thought I was the winner," said Moreno, who complained about low blows from his opponent. "Cermeno gave a great fight and I'm not against a rematch."

Promoter: **Box Track**
(3-27-10)

Erislandy Lara W 12 Danny Perez

***Las Vegas, Nevada*:** Cuban refugee and former amateur star Lara might have shown the world he's got the goods to crack into contention at junior middleweight with his safe-but-sound, one-sided win over Perez at the Hard Rock's The Joint. But, in doing so, he lulled a shallow crowd into a deep sleep.

With just 10 fights behind him and the promise to fight for a world title by the end of the year, Lara, 11-0 (6), certainly showed he has the skills to be a threat at junior middleweight. But missing the panache and pop of fellow *Cubanos* such as potential superstars Yuriorkis Gamboa and Guillermo Rigondeaux, Lara's fiercest adversary might be the box office.

Unable to break through Lara's defense or distance-driven straight left, Perez, 34-7 (17), was in pursuit through 10 uneventful rounds. For the first six stanzas, Lara jabbed, moved, and countered with his left, easily handling Perez and evading wide hooks and rights.

The 26-year-old Lara, 156½, Miami, Florida, broke up the monotony in the fifth by obliging Perez, 155½, Carlsbad, California, to trade body shots for a minute or so. He allowed Perez to play inside a bit longer in the sixth then took off most of the seventh before resuming his fail-safe game plan for the last three chapters.

Despite the whitewash loss, Perez was never in danger of going down, while Lara was unmarked from what amounted to a sparring session. All three Nevada judges—Dave Moretti, C.

PHOTO BY MIGUEL GUTIERREZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Moreno (right) edges Cermeno to retain WBA belt

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Lara wins dull decision over Perez

J. Ross and Jerry Roth—scored it 99-91 for Lara. Perez, 33, dropped his second-straight bout.

The referee was Vic Drakulich (USA).

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(4-2-10)
Chris Cozzone

Abner Mares KO 5 Felipe Almanza

Los Angeles, California: The mission for Mares, 119, when he fought journeyman Almanza, 119 ½, Colombia, in a featherweight bout on the *Fight Night Club* card at Club Nokia was to get in some much-needed rounds and avoid injury at all costs. Mission accomplished.

The 2004 Mexican Olympian, who lives in the Los Angeles area, had fought only four times since 2007 and hadn't been in the ring since the previous August, largely because of a detached retina and a period in which he was negotiating a new contract with Golden Boy Promotions. He had to shake off some ring rust. He also had to avoid getting cut, which might have been catastrophic for the 24-year-old's career. Mares was scheduled to challenge for Yonnhy Perez' IBF bantamweight belt—his first such opportunity—on the Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez undercard May 22 at the Staples Center.

In the end, there were no glitches. Almanza, 17-16-4 (8), is a clever veteran but a light puncher and no match for a fighter of Mares' talent. He survived for a while by moving adeptly, but threw very few punches aside from several solid blows to the thighs that angered the winner. Mares, 20-0 (13), said it was all he could do to control his anger and expected to have some nasty bruises. Meanwhile, the biggest concern of Mares' corner was Almanza's head and the possibility of a cut. "Watch the *cabeza*! Watch the head!" his corner yelled repeatedly every time their heads even came close to coming together.

A patient Mares, superior to the 34-year-old Almanza in every way, gradually cut off the ring with a steady stream of hard jabs and punishing power shots. The end came suddenly at 2:23 of the fifth round. Almanza's back was against the ropes when Mares landed a right uppercut and then followed with the same punch smack on the Colombian's chin, which sent him to his knees. Referee Raul Caiz (USA) waved off the one-sided fight without finishing his count as an appreciative hometown crowd roared its approval.

Afterward, Mares was all smiles. "I felt a little rust in my timing," he said. "Like any fight, though, you have to figure out your opponent. I didn't know anything about him until today. I felt him out a little bit and then got my combinations going. I got in five good rounds. Not just a knockout, but five good rounds. I threw a lot of punches."

Television: **Fox Sports Net**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(3-25-10)
Michael Rosenthal ■

(Continued from Page 24)

Solis' sixth-straight kayo likely set up a WBC eliminator against journeyman Ray Austin, with the winner becoming the mandatory challenger for Vitali Klitschko. Though it was only his 16th pro win, Solis feels he's ready for anyone in the division, including world champ Wladimir Klitschko, brother Vitali, and beltholder David Haye, whom Solis stopped in the finals of the 2001 World Championships.

"I came out of the amateurs as the number-one guy," Solis said. "That's the reason I came to this country, to fight the Klitschkos. I feel they're avoiding me. They should have fought me already. If they want to fight me, I'll fight them tomorrow. I'm ready to fight Ray Austin, the Klitschkos, whoever they line up for me. If David Haye wants to fight me, he can get another beating.

"As a Cuban-American, I'm not representing Cuba. I represent the United States. I will be the first U.S. champion in the last 10 years."

Solis is no ordinary prospect. "La Sombra" (The Shadow) had a reported 359-bout amateur career that included gold medals at the 2004 Olympics, the '01, '03 and '05 World Championships, the '05 World Cup, and the '99 and '03 Pan-American Games. Solis also won two of his three bouts against Cuban star Felix Savon.

It was during the 2004 Olympics in Athens that Solis said he first began to feel discontent with his situation in Cuba. He saw other, less-accomplished Olympians being courted by promoters and managers for professional contracts, all while knowing that the Cuban government would never let him have more than his modest stipend and his amateur glory.

A little more than two years later, while Team Cuba was training in Venezuela for the Pan-American Games, Solis and his teammates were told they wouldn't be getting any money for the tournament. Solis suddenly decided to make a run for it.

"It was a quick thing," he said. "It wasn't planned. It was just something that happened at the time. I told someone in Venezuela that I knew that I wanted to leave the country. The guy asked me, 'Are you crazy?' I said, 'I am crazy about this government. I gotta leave. I gotta get out of here.'"

Solis and teammate Yan Barthelemy got away from the team hotel on a bus, and then they were picked up by the contact Solis had phoned earlier. Solis said he called back to the hotel so he could arrange for someone to send him his clothes. Another teammate, Yuriorkis Gamboa, picked up the phone and cursed Solis for not taking him along. Solis' contact drove back to the hotel and picked up Gamboa on the way to the bus station, where the three fighters got on a bus headed toward the Colombian border. They got off near the border and took a taxi into Colombia.

From Colombia, Solis phoned another contact, Miami lawyer Tony Gonzalez, his current co-manager. The three fighters stayed in a Colombian hotel for nearly three months until finally getting permission to fly to Miami. "At one time I never thought I would fight professionally," Solis told the Associated Press shortly after arriving in Florida. "But my life started changing, and here I am,"

While waiting in Colombia, the trio signed with Oner's German-based Arena Box Promotions. After a week in Miami, the trio moved to Germany, where they made their pro debuts in April 2007. In his first bout, Solis scored a 47-second stoppage of veteran Andreas Sidon, who was 32-7 at the time.

Solis moved to Miami in 2008 and trained for three fights with Orlando Cuellar before finding his way back to Diaz. Under Diaz, Solis' weight has slowly increased. Diaz said the gain has been a result of added muscle, and that Solis will eventually get down to an ideal fighting weight of about 255.

"You have to realize this: When Solis was in the amateurs, he had no punching power whatsoever," the Spanish-speaking Diaz said through Perez. "He wasn't a puncher. So he increased his weight to turn that fat into muscular weight so he could develop power."

Regarding his choice of fat-guy trunks, Perez said Solis would go for a different look in his next fight. Solis is also taking English classes, Perez said, in hopes of making himself more appealing to U.S. fans.

Of course, the best way to win a following is to win fights, win them impressively, and win them on television. Solis appears to be blossoming as a pro, but he's getting impatient for a big fight and annoyed by HBO's seeming reluctance to back him as it has Gamboa. Though with Top Rank now on board as a co-promoter, Solis should have access to more U.S. television dates.

If there is any concern in the Solis camp, it's not about the fighter's weight. Perez said the lone worry is that Solis will get bored and lose interest while waiting for his shot.

"The only problem is, I'm not getting the opportunities because no one wants to fight me," Solis said. "But from one to 10, I'll beat any one of the top 10. There's no doubt I can beat anybody. I just want to bring back the belt to this country. I'm waiting for the opportunity. Whoever gives me the opportunity, I'm going to take it from them." ■

Solis had no trouble whatsoever stopping former contender Monte Barrett inside of two rounds at Madison Square Garden in October 2009. The Cuban is eager to get a crack at the world's best heavyweight and feels that he's ready for anybody.

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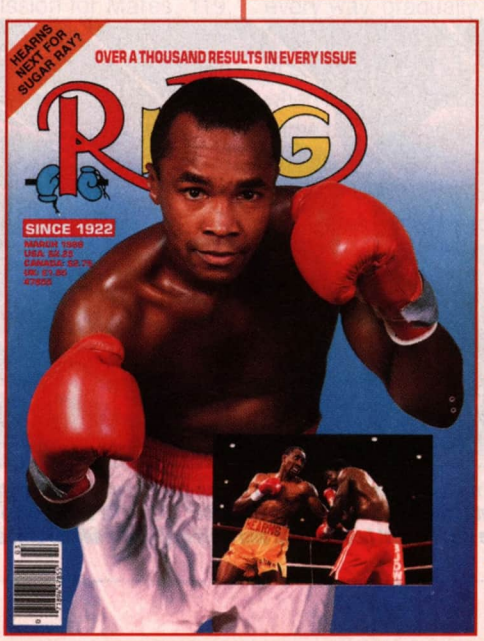

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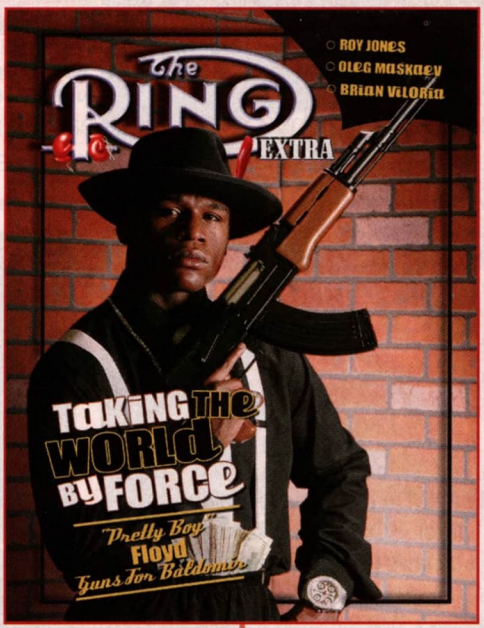

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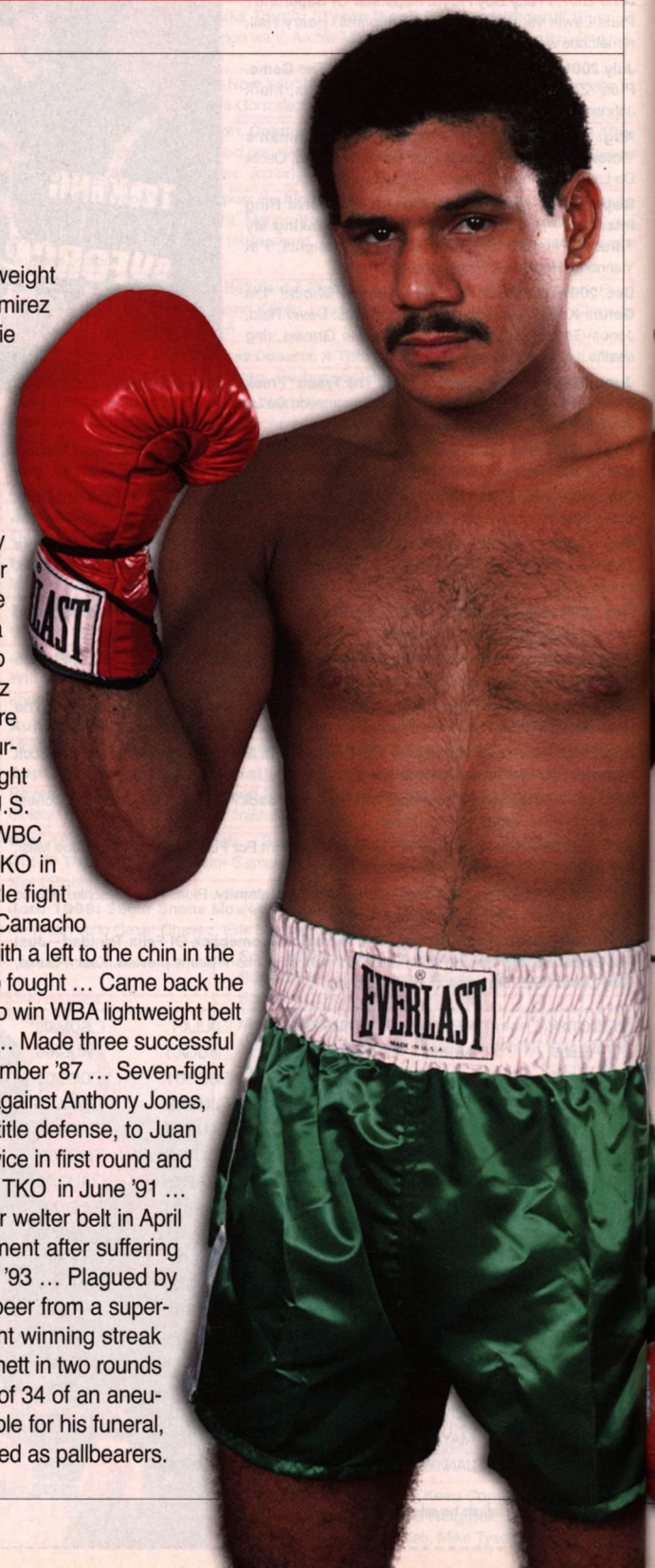
Hall of Fame Profile

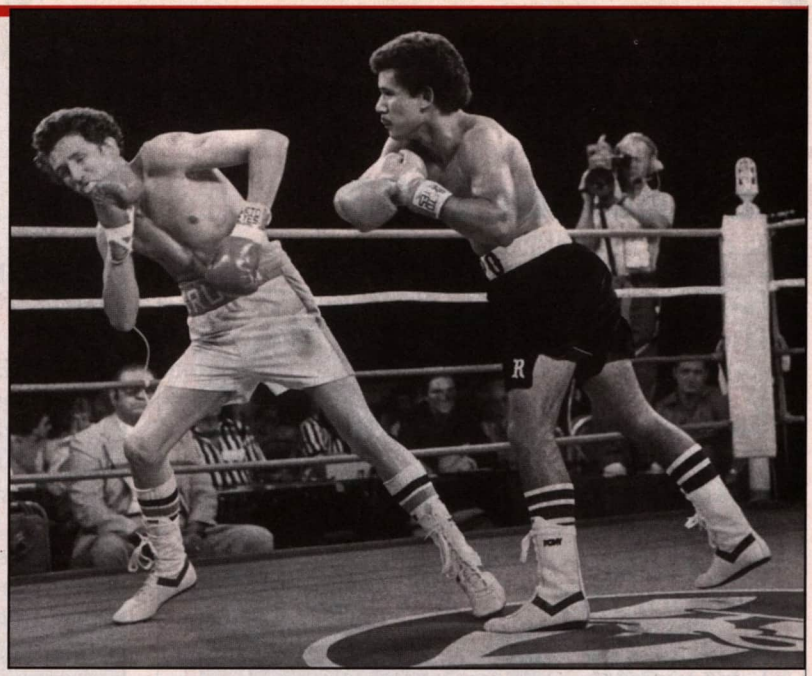
THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

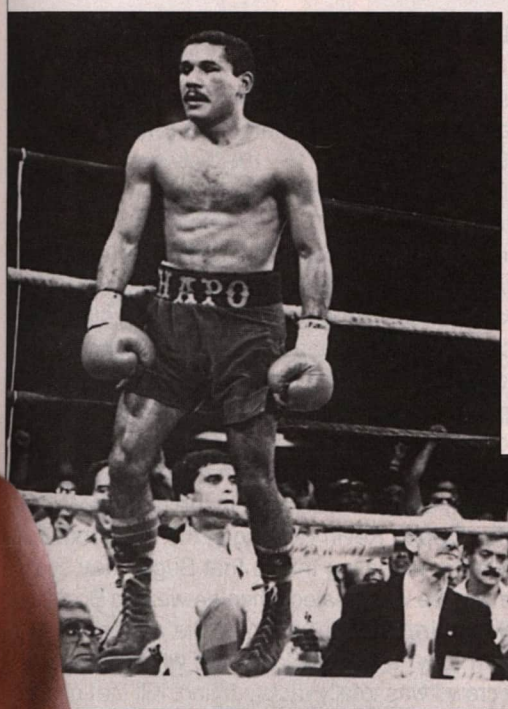
Edwin Rosario

Birthdate: March 15, 1963
Date of Death: December 1, 1997
Birthplace: Toa Baja, Puerto Rico
Nickname: El Capo
Weight Classes: Lightweight
Record: 47-6 (41)
Titles Held: WBC/WBA lightweight; WBA junior welterweight
Best Performances: Edwin Viruet (KO 3), Jose Ramirez (W 12), Roberto Elizondo (KO 1), Howard Davis (W 12), Frankie Randall (W 10), Livingstone Bramble (KO 2), Juan Nazario (KO 8), Anthony Jones (KO 6), Loreto Garza (KO 3)
Year of IBHOF Induction: 2006
Background: Inspired to box by brother Papo, who many at the time thought was destined to be the next "great one" out of Puerto Rico before dying suddenly two years into Capo's pro career, allegedly because of drugs … Spurred by brother's memory to win world championship … Known for aggressive style and one-punch power, especially a concussive right … Bolted to a 21-0 (20) start as a professional … Made a splash with third-round kayo of veteran Edwin Viruet, setting up a shot for vacant WBC lightweight title against Jose Luis Ramirez in May 1983 … Dominated Ramirez for first seven rounds, before fizzling at end and hanging on to win decision … Hand injury during Ramirez victory forced 10-month layoff … Made three-straight title defenses, including split-decision victory over former U.S. Olympian gold medalist Howard Davis in June '84 … Lost WBC lightweight belt in rematch with Ramirez via fourth-round TKO in November '84 … Went on four-fight winning streak to get title fight against undefeated WBC lightweight claimant Hector "Macho" Camacho in Madison Square Garden in June '86 … Rocked Camacho with a left to the chin in the fifth in split-decision loss that forever altered the way Camacho fought … Came back the following fight and stopped Livingstone Bramble in two rounds to win WBA lightweight belt in September '86, becoming first fighter to ever stop Bramble … Made three successful title defenses … Lost WBA belt to Julio Cesar Chavez in November '87 … Seven-fight winning streak set up title shot for vacant WBA lightweight title against Anthony Jones, who he stopped in sixth-round in July '89 … Lost belt in first title defense, to Juan Nazario via TKO in April '90 … Knocked down Loreto Garza twice in first round and twice in third to win WBA junior welterweight title via third-round TKO in June '91 … Stopped by Akinobu Hiranaka in first round to lose WBA junior welter belt in April '92 … Never received another title shot … Announced retirement after suffering seventh-round TKO to contender Frankie Randall in January '93 … Plagued by personal demons in retirement and was arrested for stealing beer from a supermarket … Embarked on comeback in 1997 with brief five-fight winning streak against club-level fighters … Took out journeyman Harold Bennett in two rounds September 25, 1997 in last fight … Died suddenly at the age of 34 of an aneurysm on December 1, 1997 … Attracted more than 5,000 people for his funeral, including many past and present Puerto Rican titlists who served as pallbearers.

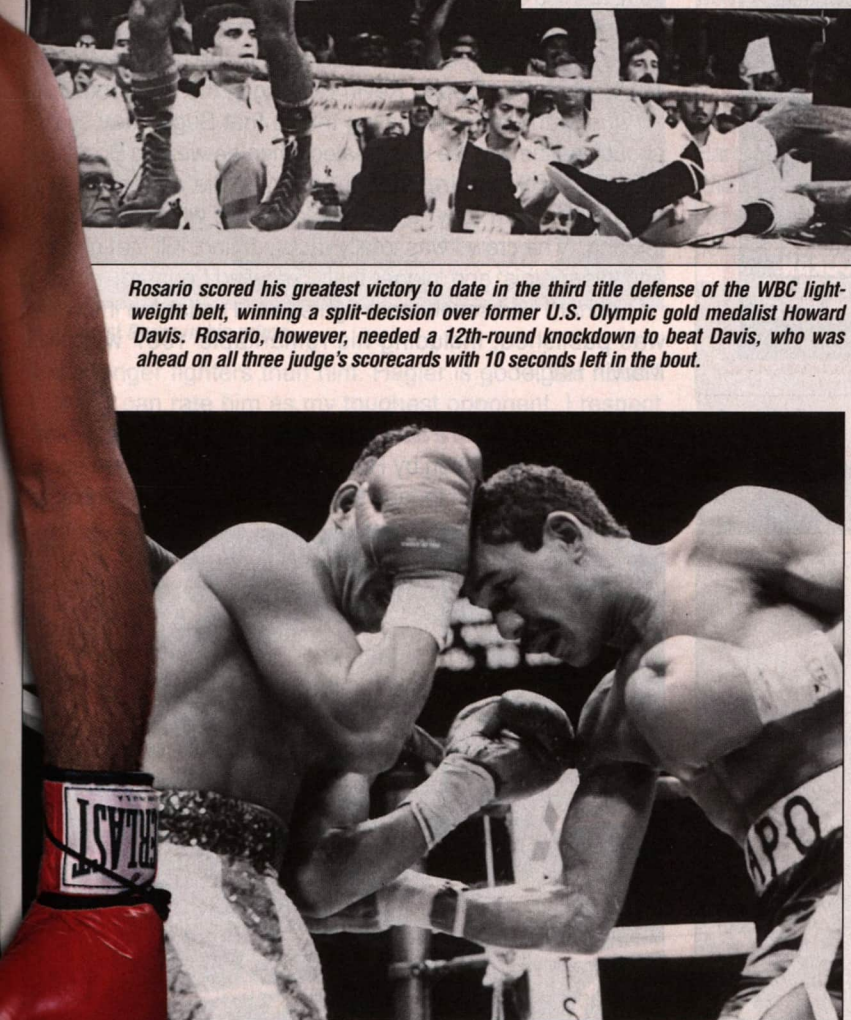


Rosario's third-round knockout of Edwin Viruet set the stage for "El Capo's" first title shot. The rangy Viruet had far greater experience than Rosario, having twice gone the distance with Roberto Duran. Nonetheless, Rosario stopped him in the third round.

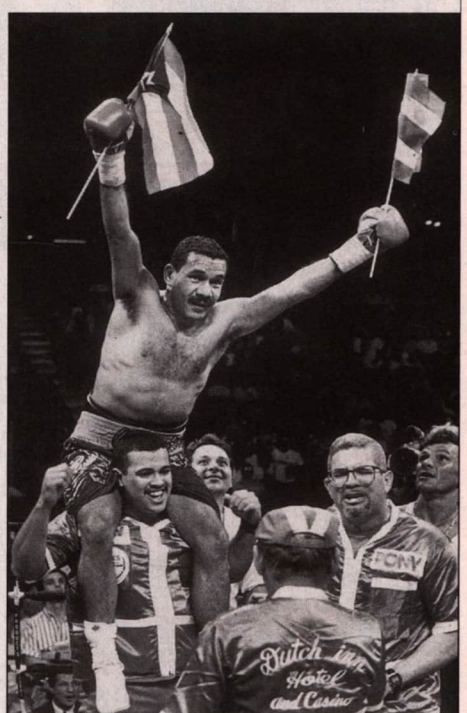




Rosario scored his greatest victory to date in the third title defense of the WBC lightweight belt, winning a split-decision over former U.S. Olympic gold medalist Howard Davis. Rosario, however, needed a 12th-round knockdown to beat Davis, who was ahead on all three judge's scorecards with 10 seconds left in the bout.

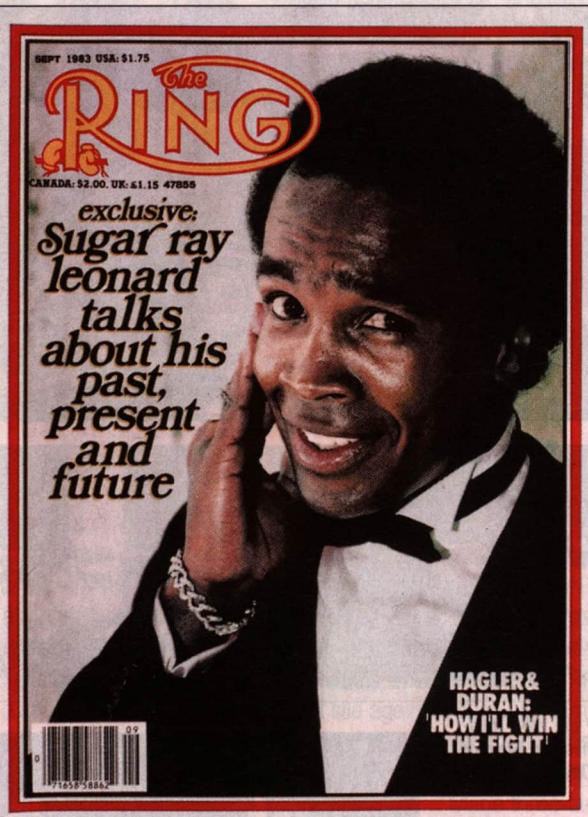


Although he lost a close decision to Hector Camacho in 1986 at Madison Square Garden, Rosario had "The Macho Man" out on his feet in the fifth round, which caused Camacho to become a defensive fighter the rest of his career.



Rosario celebrates his last great victory, a TKO of Loreto Garza to capture the WBA junior welterweight title in June 1991. El Capo had Garza down four times before the lopsided bout was finally halted.

September 1983



COVER STORY: "Sugar Ray Leonard Talks About His Past, Present, And Future" is a question-and-answer style interview conducted by Bert Sugar. Due to a detached retina, Leonard had not fought since February 15, 1982, when he stopped Bruce Finch in the third round of a WBC/WBA welterweight title fight in Reno, Nevada.

Sugar asked a lot of questions about Leonard's retirement, but many of the answers Leonard gave eventually proved to be untrue. For example, when asked if he had ever had the "urge to return" to boxing, Sugar Ray said, "I'm in the same atmosphere, evaluating fighters, giving them advice, discussing boxing; it's comparable to what I did in the ring, although, to tell the truth, nothing can actually compare. But it's close enough, close enough to satisfy me so that I don't get that urge."

As it turned out, Leonard was back in the ring on May 11, 1984, when he stopped Kevin Howard in the ninth round.

One of the more revealing things that Sugar Ray spoke about was the way he was treated when he went to Boston to fight Dick Ecklund in 1979. It began at the airport when a priest called him "boy" and got a lot worse when he entered the ring. "The crowd was totally racist, crying 'Kill that nigger!' and 'nigger this' and 'nigger that,'" recalled Leonard.

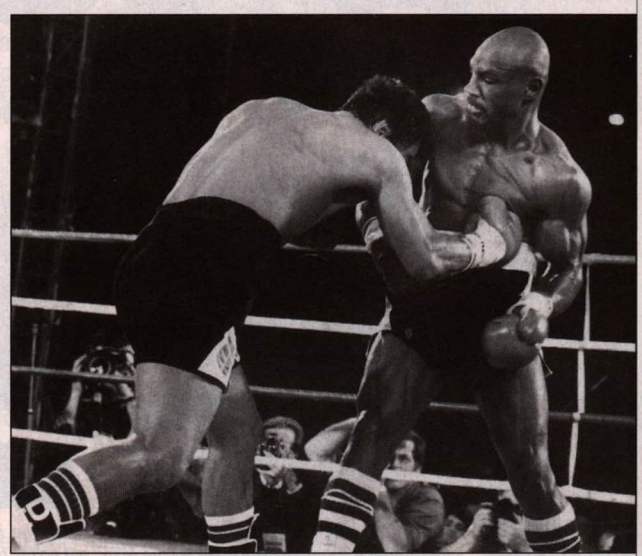
Leonard had seven more fights (4-2-1) after the interview was published, including his remarkable 1987 win over Marvin Hagler.

World Champions

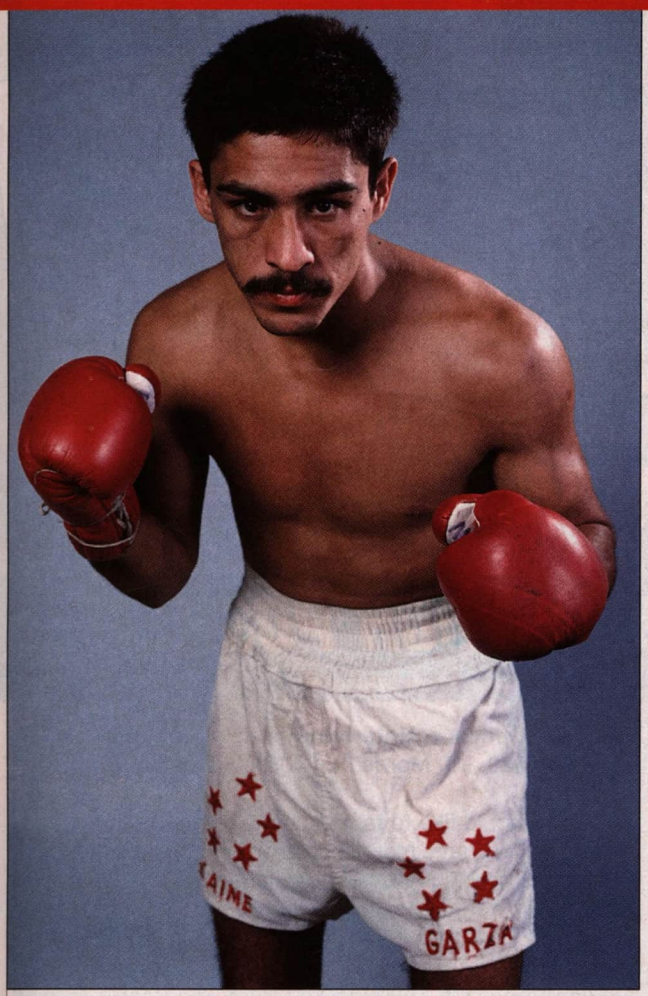
(for the period ended July 25, 1983)

Heavyweight: Larry Holmes
Light Heavyweight: Michael Spinks
Middleweight: Marvin Hagler
Junior Middleweight: Thomas Hearns
Welterweight: vacant
Junior Welterweight: Aaron Pryor
Lightweight: vacant
Junior Lightweight: Roger Mayweather
Featherweight: Eusebio Pedroza
Junior Featherweight: vacant
Bantamweight: Jeff Chandler
Flyweight: Charlie Magri

"How I'll Beat Marvin Hagler" is a brief article allegedly written by Roberto Duran. "I don't care about moving up in weight to face Marvin Hagler. I've faced bigger



Duran digs a right to Hagler's body



Kayo artist Garza in his prime

and stronger fighters than him. Hagler is good, but I don't know if I can rate him as my toughest opponent. I respect him because he's the champion. That's it!"

"How I'll Beat Roberto Duran" is a companion piece carrying Hagler's byline. "I'm going to beat him, there's no doubt about that. I feel I'm going to have to beat him every way—inside, outside, whatever. I like the fact that he said he was going to beat me inside of five rounds—that means he's going to be there, right in front of me."

On November 10, 1983, Hagler won a close but unanimous 15-round decision over Duran by scores of 144-142, 146-145, and 144-143.

"Jaime Garza: The New West Coast Sensation" by Chris Coats examines Garza's relative lack of fame. You would think that the undefeated Garza, 38-0 (36), who had just captured the vacant WBC 122-pound belt, would be packing arenas. But he was hampered by a lack of TV exposure and the fact that he was born in California and raised in Texas. Coats writes that Garza was viewed as a "Chicano by some and a Gringo by others."

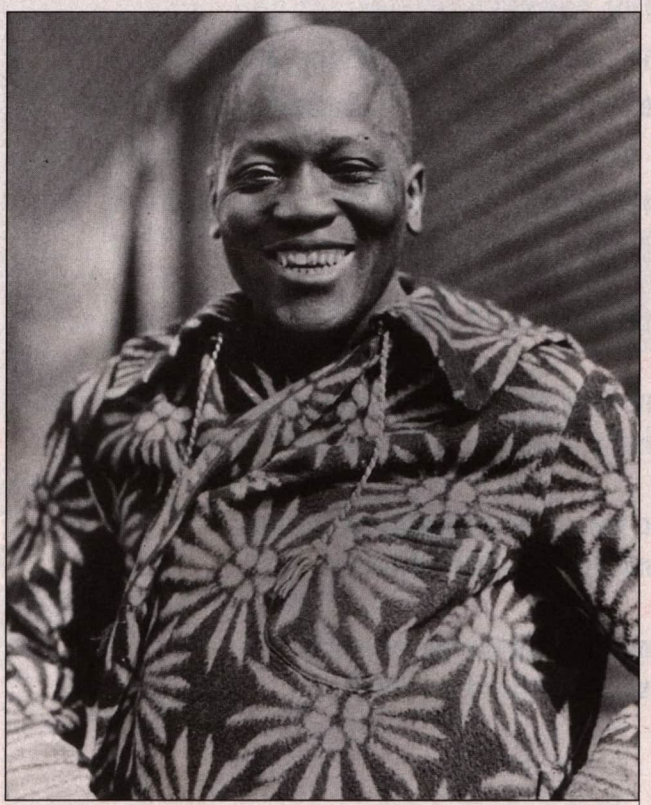
Garza lost the title in his second defense when Juan Meza came off the floor to score a knockout in the first round. Garza fought on with mixed success until February 1995 but never got another title shot.

"Anatomy Of A Non-Fight: Michael Spinks Vs. Eddie Mustafa Muhammad—What Really Happened" by Bert Sugar is the inside story of the light heavyweight title fight that was canceled at the weigh-in when Mustafa came in 2½ pounds over the 175-pound division limit. Sugar proved that the scales were wrong by weighing a 36-pound sack of flour, which according to the official scale weighed 39½ pounds! By then, however, the match had been called off.

"Gotch Against Johnson: The Dream Match That Almost Was" by Mike Chapman spins a yarn about a proposed bout between Jack Johnson, the first black heavyweight champion, and Frank Gotch, the wrestling champion.

Gotch had bet a lot of money on Jim Jeffries when the old champ came out of retirement to challenge Johnson and was "saddened to see his old friend punched about the ring" by Johnson. Gotch signified he was willing to fight Johnson, but the bout never happened.

"Fighter Of The Month" honors go to Mustafa Hamsho who had just won a 12-round decision over favored Wilfred Benitez. "From the opening bell, Hamsho went to work, cornering Benitez and pounding him with everything at his disposal, including forearms, shoulders, and body slams." ■



Johnson would have probably laughed at Gotch's challenge

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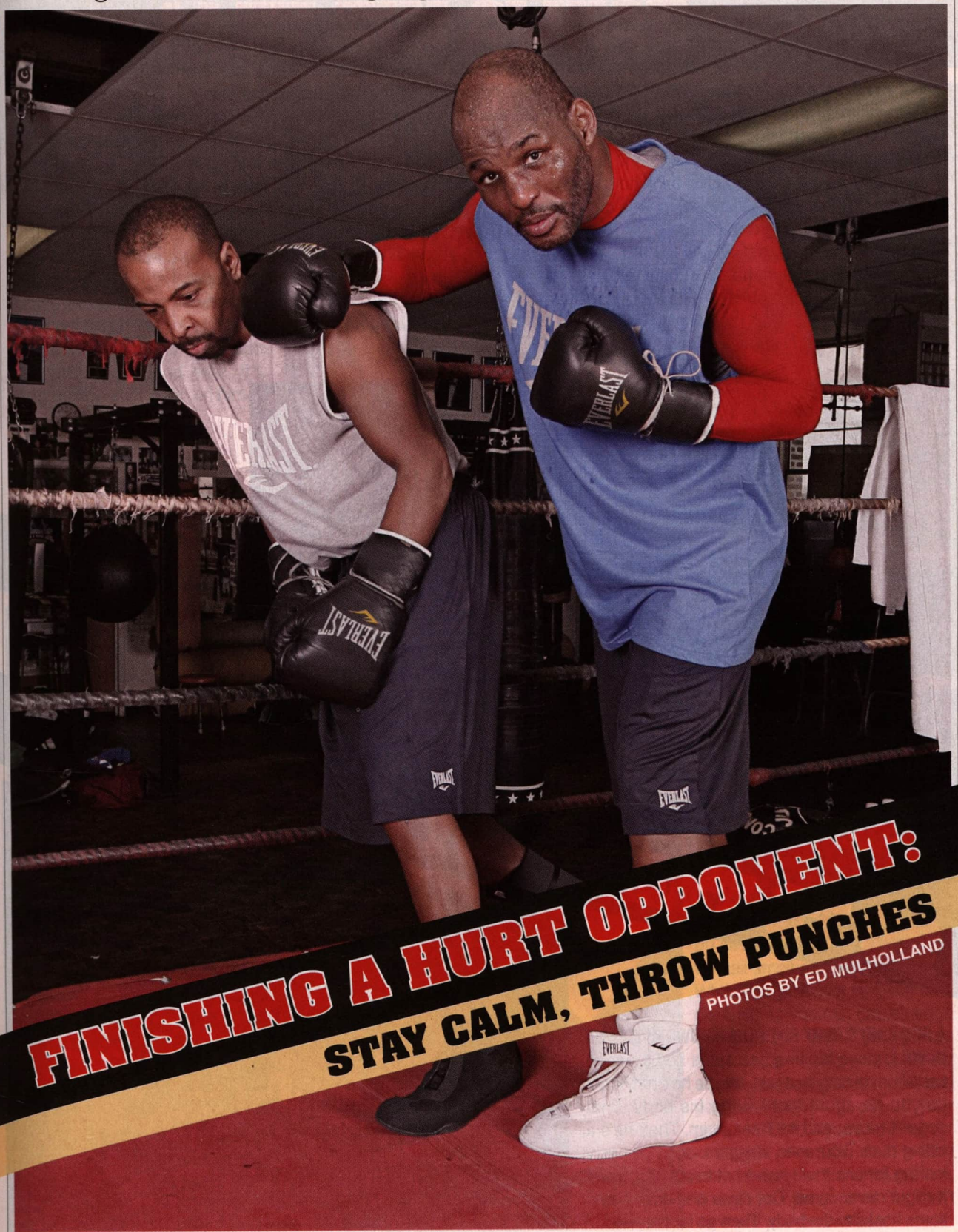
Perfect Execution

Boxing Lessons From A Living Legend

By Bernard Hopkins



FINISHING A HURT OPPONENT:

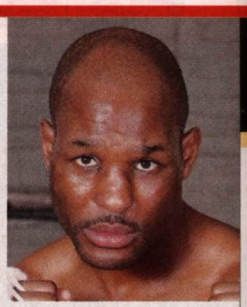
STAY CALM, THROW PUNCHES

PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

One of the most important things you have to learn is how to finish an opponent who's hurt. You might think it comes easy, that all you do is get close and throw shots and he'll go. Sometimes that works. You get on your man and throw as many punches as fast as you can, and if you throw enough to keep him from throwing back, maybe the referee will jump in and stop it. It happens that way sometimes. I see world-class pros who try to finish guys this way all the time. Sometimes it works.

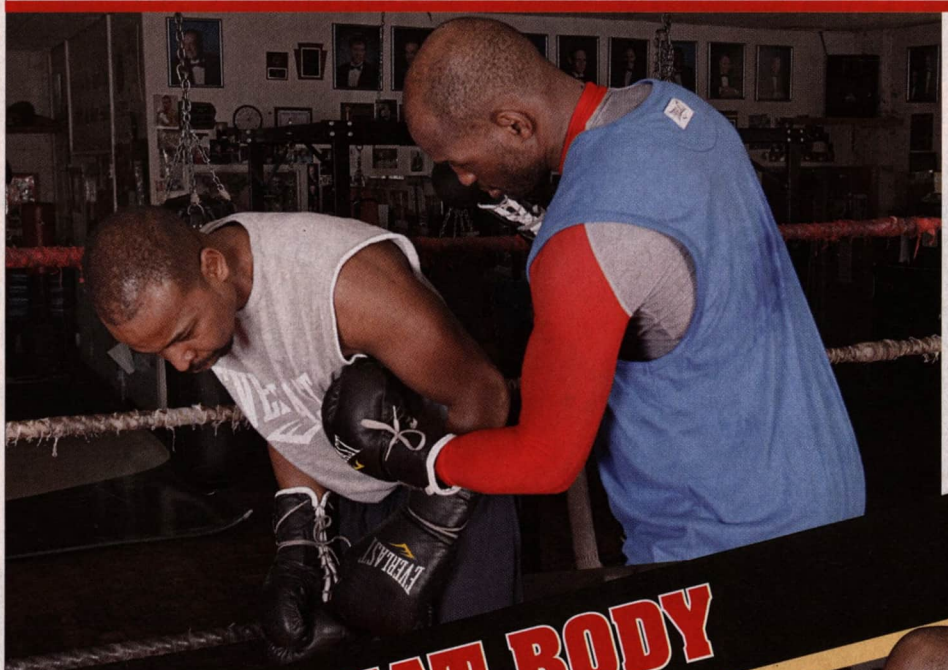
But guess what—sometimes it doesn't work. And when it doesn't, now you've punched yourself out and made your opponent think he can take your best shots. What do you think he's going to do then? Also, when you open up on a guy and go crazy, you leave yourself open to any kind of a counterpunch. All your opponent has to do is close his eyes and throw a punch, and if you're all wild and swinging, before you know it, it's you who's hurt. We've all seen that happen.

The way to get a man out of there is to stay calm. It's all about discipline. The first couple times you get a man hurt, you'll want to go crazy. That's instinct. Your job is to control that instinct. Be smart. Take your time. Get position, remember your fundamentals, and execute. Arnold Joseph and I show you how.

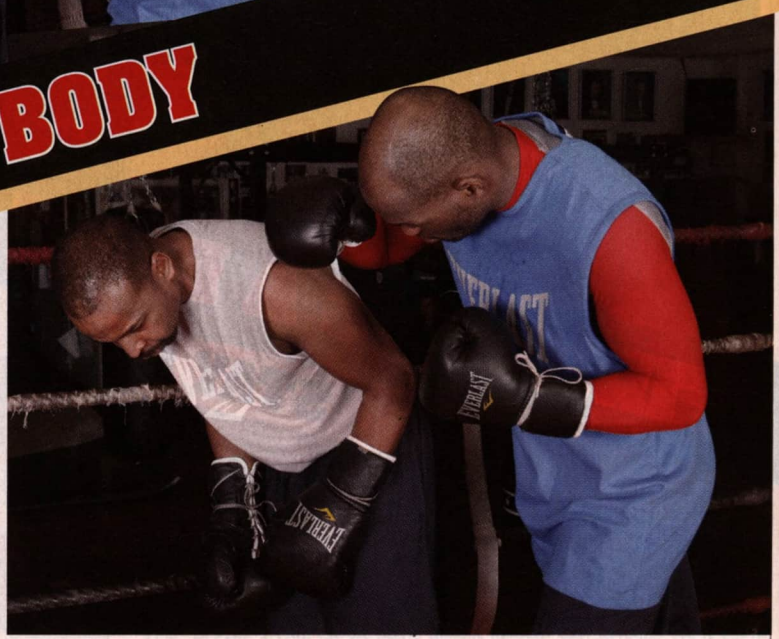


BERNARD HOPKINS
Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)



GO TO THAT BODY



A GUY WHO'S HURT BUT STILL KNOWS WHERE HE IS WILL move his head as much as he can to keep from getting hit again. Maybe he'll run. What do you do about that? Bang his body. That doesn't move, and it'll freeze him. Then he's a sitting duck. Your man staggers, don't go crazy looking for one more headshot to put him down. It might never come. Get close and drive home some hooks to the body. Then go for the head.

DON'T LET HIM CLINCH

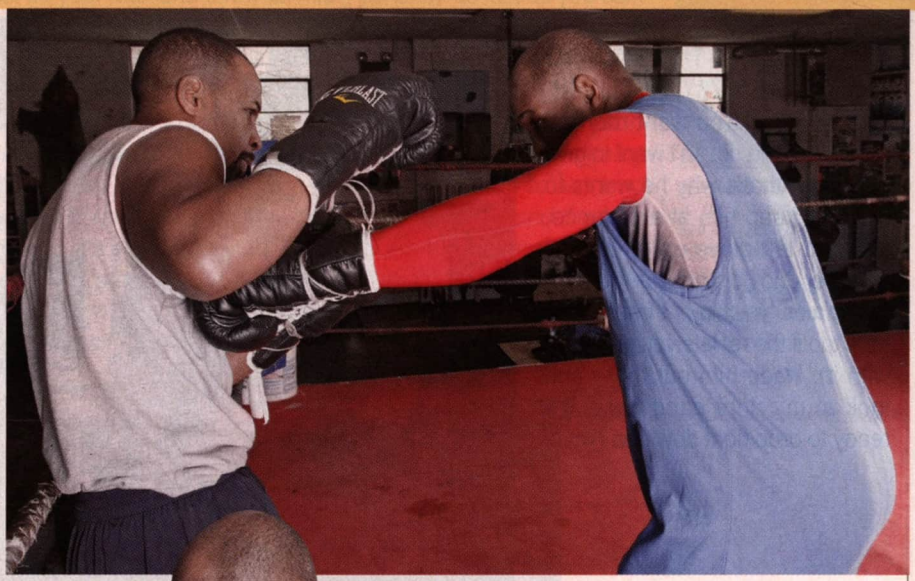
NINE OUT OF 10 TIMES A HURT FIGHTER WILL TRY TO CLINCH. Don't let him! You want room to punch, and he doesn't want to give it to you—that's why he wants to hold. To keep him at a distance, get your left glove up on his left shoulder and hold him out there. (A forearm on his chin or throat works here too if the ref lets you get away with it). Keep him out there and look at my right hand here. It's ready to drop right down on him.

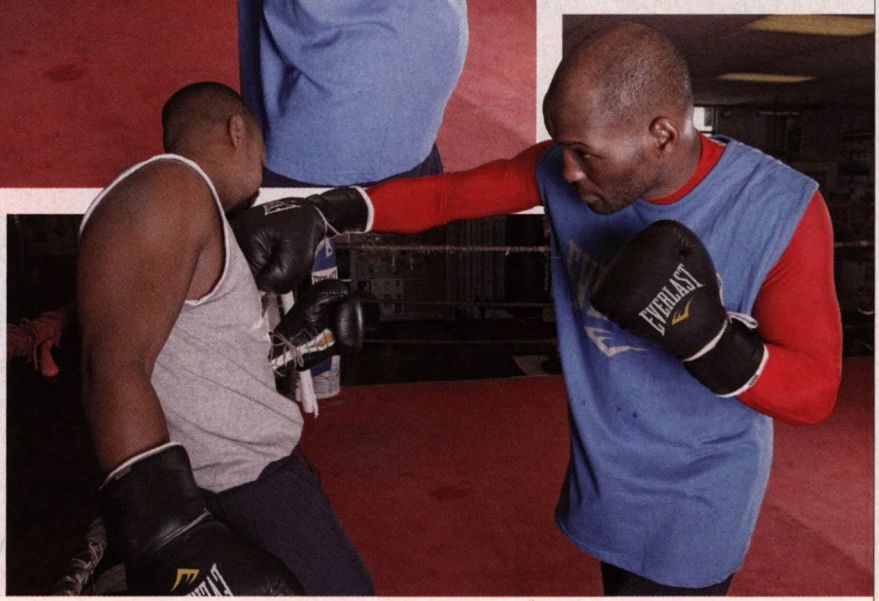
THE WRONG WAY: GETTING TOO CLOSE

TOO MANY GUYS GET THEIR MAN HURT AND THEN GET TOO CLOSE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. That's what we call smothering your punches. When you get a man hurt, you want distance so you can get leverage and execute. When you get too close, you're helping your opponent survive—he can grab and hold, and you're too close to get off your punches. Before you know it, your chance is gone. You want to stay calm, remember the fundamentals, and get your punches off. You can't do that if you're too close.

THROW COMBINATIONS

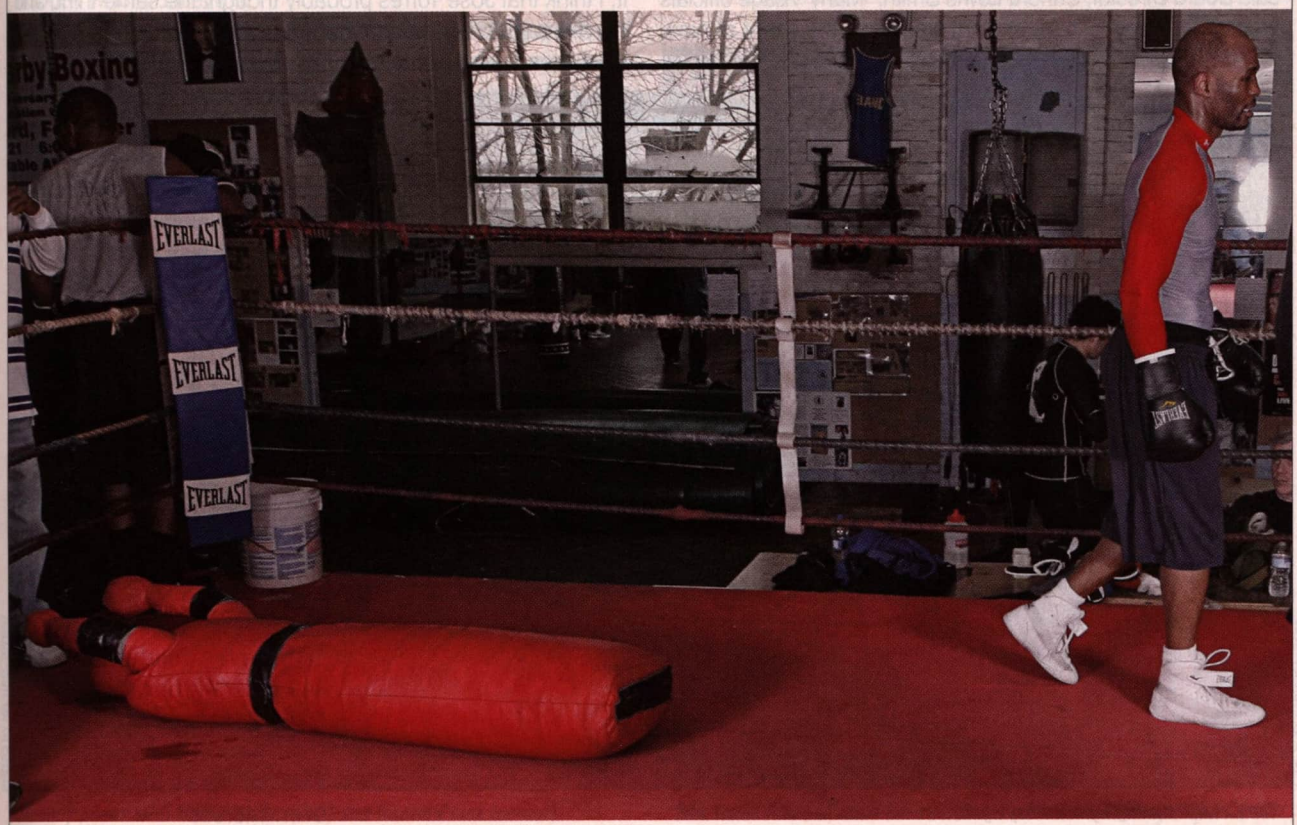
THE THINGS YOU DID THAT GOT YOUR MAN HURT IN THE FIRST PLACE ARE THE THINGS YOU DO TO FINISH HIM. You know what they are. Get position. Keep your chin down. Keep your hands up. Keep your eyes straight ahead and throw good, smart combinations. Just because you get a guy hurt doesn't mean you throw everything out the window and fight like you're in the street. Do it right. Not some of the time. All the time.





PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

EVEN WHEN I'M GOING ROUNDS IN THE RING WITH THIS DUMMY, I'm thinking about how to attack when I get my man hurt—about going downstairs, about keeping distance, about staying calm and executing. You can see the result.



By Michael Rivest

D'Amato's Gym Makes A Comeback

"Cus would feel good about it," Kevin Rooney said. "He loved this gym and what it stood for. He never meant for it to die with him."

But it was dying. A year ago, Cus D'Amato's Catskill Boxing Gym had become more like a museum—all about yesterday. Fading newspaper clippings papered the walls with yesterday's news. The stories told of gym graduates Wilfred Benitez, Edwin Rosario, Jose Torres, Vinnie Paz, Rooney himself and, of course, the gym's most famous, albeit notorious, graduate, Mike Tyson.

D'Amato's "Willies" still stood against the wall—padded dummies with numbers spread out on them, each number referring to a particular punch. A boom box still played D'Amato's raspy voice hollering combinations by those numbers: "7-2-3! 7-2-5!" and the fighter would unload accordingly. Why "Willies?" D'Amato invented the technique to help Jose Torres defeat Willie Pastrano for the light heavyweight championship in 1965.

"The gym was being used, but something was missing," said Board Director, Sandra Lewis Smith, "Many Village officials wanted it closed." Then, at what was likely the count of nine, Rooney walked back in and the gym rose up again.

His role as heir to D'Amato's legacy was muted for several years by troubles with alcohol, but Rooney's been sober for nearly three years now. "I know better than anybody the foundation this gym can be to a young, lost kid, because I was one of them," Rooney said. "And when Cus died in '85 it just set something off in me, same as it did in Mike [Tyson], I suppose. But I've learned; it's given me all the more to pass on to the kids coming in now."

Alongside trainers Nadia Hujtyn, who also goes back to the D'Amato days, Ernest Westbrook and Lenord Pierre, Rooney gets to touch about 20 young lives each night and charges them the same fee Cus charged him—zero.

A wheel has come full circle.

"Kevin is a part of our history," Smith said. "He's an incredible trainer and a real pushover for kids. Having him here is just so wonderful for all of us." Rooney volunteers his time, same as D'Amato did all those years

Ask 17-year-old Adolfo Lopez, getting ready for his first amateur bout in July. "Whenever I feel like, you know, I can't do it, I think that Jose Torres probably thought the same thing and maybe said it right here, where I'm sitting talking to you," he said, then added something that sounded like Cus or maybe Rooney—it's hard to tell—"Fear can be your friend."

Sixteen-year-old Islam Jenkins credits the gym for keeping him out of trouble. "I used to be stupid," he said with the zeal of a convert, "getting in fights out there," as he nodded to the street outside. "But that has no honor, you know? I'm better than that."

Pierre says that Jenkins exhibits enormous potential in the ring. Could he be on the cover of this magazine in 10 years? Stranger things have already happened in that gym.

But Cus' gym, like his life, was never solely about the search for the next "big thing" or he wouldn't have had the countless adoring acolytes who showed no such potential or even interest.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL RIVEST

The Catskill Boxing Gym is busy again

"Cus used to say that money is worthless," Rooney said. "I think what he said exactly is that it 'was for throwing off the back of trains.'"

Cus would have liked 17-year-old Naomi Chick. She joined the gym a year ago after being sexually molested by six young monsters in the neighboring City of Kingston. Maybe she'll think about working toward an actual fight and maybe she won't. But for now, she says she belongs there. "I used to feel like I was weak," Naomi said. "And you have to feel like you have a sense of power over your life. Boxing, coming here, does that for me."

Her father, Graham, reflects a deep wisdom acquired by walking a road that is every father's nightmare. "I learned after a while to get out of the way of the recovery process," he said "We tried to force our idea of recovery on her with counseling and different kinds of therapy, but she didn't want it," he said, "She wanted to come here."

Nobody's claiming Cus' Gym is a replacement for professional counseling, only that it's helping kids once again, as it used to, and in the language they seem to understand.

Cus D'Amato's Catskill Boxing Gym is no museum. It's alive.

Rooney Back At His Old Post

Kevin Rooney' was 19-years old when he left Staten Island in 1975 to train under Cus D'Amato at his Catskill Gym. Rooney's story since then has been about rising and falling, and, to everyone's amazement, rising again.

"I feel like I've lived a lot of different lives, all of them incredible," he said, "If it hadn't all been written in the papers, nobody would believe it."

Rooney became a good fighter who fought the great Alexis Arguello in 1982. But as a trainer, he was the best, learning the craft at the feet of the master, D'Amato himself. When D'Amato died in 1985, Rooney rode the rocket that was Mike Tyson. He made millions and gambled millions, eventually losing everything—his money, his family, and for years his fight with the toughest opponent of his life, alcoholism.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL RIVEST

Rooney poses with Nadia Hujtyn (left) and Naomi Chick (center)

He would become well-acquainted with the bottom before finally turning his life around in 2007. "I began to see how I had no one to blame but myself, and that no one could turn things around but me. So I did."

It was a long road back, and like so many of life's roads, it was traversed one step at a time, one day at a time.

Slowly, Kevin Rooney started to find his way home to where it all started, Catskill.

He's older and wiser now and ready to assume the role Cus trained him to serve at the Catskill Gym, as heir to the legacy. ■

Michael Rivest can be reached at mrivest@nycap.rr.com

USA vs. Italy Results

March 27, 2010, Harvey, Illinois

112 pounds: Vincenza Picardi, ITA, dec. Miguel Cartagena, USA
112 pounds: Alex Ferramosca, ITA, dec. Adan Ortiz, USA
119 pounds: Vittorio Parrinello, ITA, dec. Luis Rosa, USA
125 pounds: Alessio DiSavino, ITA, dec. Ernesto Garza, USA
132 pounds: Domenico Valentino, ITA, dec. Duran Caferro, USA
141 pounds: Davide Cencianelli, ITA, dec. Zeddie Adams, USA,
152 pounds: Alex Martin, USA, vs. dec. Diego DiLuisa, ITA
165 pounds: Terrell Gausha, USA, dec. Luca Podda, ITA
178 pounds: Simone Fiori, ITA, dec. Siju Shabazz, USA
201 pounds: Clemente Russo, ITA, dec. Jordan Shimmell, USA
201+ pounds: Roberto Camarelle, ITA, dec. Javier Torres, USA
132 pounds/female: Tiara Brown, USA, dec. Romina Marenda, ITA

April 2, 2010, Reno, Nevada

112 pounds: Alex Ferramosca, ITA, dec. Louie Byrd, USA
112 pounds: Vincenzo Piccardi, ITA, dec. Santos Vasquez, USA
125 pounds: Rau'shee Warren, USA, dec. Alessio DiSavino, ITA
132 pounds: Domenico Valentino, ITA, TKO 3 Adrian Martinez, USA
141 pounds: Davide Cencianelli, ITA, TKO 3 Jamel Herring, USA
152 pounds: Eduardo Alicea, USA, dec. Diego DiLuisa, ITA
165 pounds: Jesse Hart, USA, dec. Luca Podda, ITA
178 pounds: Simone Fiori, ITA, dec. Robert Brant, USA
201 pounds: Clemente Russo, ITA, dec. Javonta Charles, USA
201+ pounds: Roberto Cammarelle, ITA, dec. Lenroy Thompson, USA
132 pounds/female: Mikaela Mayer, USA, dec. Romina Marendza, ITA

Coming Events

2010 Junior Olympic National Championships
June 14, 2010, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina

2010 Women's National Golden Gloves
June 15, 2010, Hollywood, Florida

2010 Senior National Championships
July 12, 2010, Colorado Springs, Colorado

2010 Junior National Golden Gloves
July 21, 2010, Mesquite, Nevada

[The Fight Doctor]

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Dangerous Mistakes

As a former Nevada State Athletic Commission official, I understand how difficult it is to do the right thing no matter what the cost. With that said, it is impossible for me to ignore several recent errors in licensing fighters as well as ringside assessment and medical care:

Guzman-Funeka: Joan Guzman, no stranger to weight problems, was nine pounds over the 135-pound limit when he weighed in for his March 26 lightweight title bout against Ali Funeka in Las Vegas.

Any respectable commission would have canceled the bout, irrespective of financial negotiations between the camps, promoters, and networks—but not the NSAC that conveniently misplaced their mission statement that places a fighter's safety first. Instead, the NSAC advised Guzman that he could weigh no more than 150-pounds the morning of the bout.

Why have weight classes or weigh-ins, if no one adheres to the rules?

I do not dispute the discipline needed by a boxer to make weight. But if a fighter uses dangerous means to drop weight or competes in the wrong weight class, it contributes to poor performance, dehydration, slowed reflexes, and possible susceptibility to brain injury.

Obviously, Guzman has a problem and should no longer be allowed to compete as a lightweight. This is where a commission must be strong. Perhaps they forgot the 2000 Joey Gamache-Arturo Gatti New York weigh-in fiasco that resulted in Gamache being knocked out in the second round by the much heavier Gatti. Gamache was hospitalized for a severe concussion after the fight and never fought again.

In Guzman's case, the NSAC contributed to the problem and unnecessarily increased the risks to both competitors by allowing the bout to take place.

Hopkins-Jones: I could go on and on as to why the April 3 Bernard Hopkins-Roy Jones fight should have never received the Nevada commission's approval. If boxing fans didn't understand how the 45-year-old Hopkins and the 41-year-old Jones were shot before the fight, they do now. But in my professional opinion, the ring physician's handling of the event was egregious!

PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Allowing Hopkins to continue was a dubious decision

In round eight, Jones rabbit-punched Hopkins to the back of his head. Hopkins then collapsed to the canvas in pain. Referee Tony Weeks requested that the ring physician determine the boxer's ability to continue. Whether legitimate or not, Hopkins complained his head was killing him due to the foul and that he was "seeing spots." The ring doctor and referee allowed him to have five minutes to recuperate.

If a fighter suffers a foul, he is given five minutes to recover. This pertains to every foul except a head blow, because it is impossible for the physician to determine the validity of complaints like Hopkins'. A well-trained physician would have no recourse but to recommend to the referee the bout stop—especially with Hopkins writhing in pain. If Hopkins was deemed able to continue, that determination needed to be made within seconds and the bout restarted.

Hopkins later collapsed in the dressing room but was allowed to walk to the ambulance (instead of placing him on a gurney as a precaution) and later hospitalized for several hours.

This type of cavalier behavior on the part of the NSAC medical staff is less than any fighter deserves. Medical competence, however, appears to remain a low priority.

Dirrell-Abraham: During the March 27 Andre Dirrell-Arthur Abraham match, the Michigan Athletic Commission demonstrated several examples of medical ineptitude.

Abraham suffered a large eyelid laceration in the ninth round, which precipitated visiting Texas referee Lawrence Cole to call in the ringside physician. The doctor took an exceptionally long time to examine the cut and used the opportunity to apply pressure to stop the bleeding. Was he working for Abraham?

The ring doctor is to remain neutral at all times. He is not there to do the job of a cutman and treat a cut. He must assess the injury and make a rapid determination as to whether or not a boxer is at risk if he continues.

There exists a one-minute rest period between rounds. If the action does stop for an injury, the doctor taking extra time is inadvertently helping one fighter over another and can alter the fight outcome. Sadly, the incompetence didn't stop there.

In the 11th round Dirrell slipped, at which point Abraham illegally struck Dirrell on the back of the head while he was down, knocking him unconscious.

During Showtime commentator Jim Gray's interview with the ring physician, the doctor mentioned that Dirrell could have suffered bleeding in the brain—the greatest cause of death in fighters. If the injury was potentially that serious, how did the ring doctor have time to leave the boxer's side, give an interview, and then be nowhere close while the fighter staggered out of the ring with his wife assisting him?

The ring physician should never abandon their patient to give a television interview if they believe there is any chance the fighter could have suffered a life-threatening brain injury.

Holyfield-Botha: Perhaps, the most egregious event of all was the April 10th bout between Evander Holyfield and Francois Botha in Nevada.

Botha, a mere 41 years of age, looked at least 60, but was surprisingly ahead on two of the judges' scorecards going into the eighth round when Holyfield knocked Botha down twice to win.

The NSAC rationalizes that it was a fair, safe fight between two elderly boxers. NSAC Executive Director Keith Kizer told one journalist, "We wouldn't have approved Holyfield against Klitschko!"

I guess this makes it all right? Granting a fighter a boxing license is a green light for them to spar; sparring leads to headshots, and headshots lead to brain injury risk.

Neither fighter should have been approved to compete that night, nor should any commission approve them to compete again. Have they forgotten what happened to boxing greats like Muhammad Ali and Meldrick Taylor? ■

PHOTO BY MARY ANN OWEN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Should the Nevada commission have sanctioned Holyfield-Botha?

By Jim Bagg

Commission Impossible

Peter Falk would have made a heck of a boxing commissioner. After all, 90 percent of the job is about knowing how to turn a blind eye.

Actually, though, we wouldn't want Columbo to be a commissioner. We'd want him *grilling* the commission members. Couldn't you envision him starting to walk away, then turning around and uttering his famous catch phrase, "Oh, just one more thing ... What's your primary responsibility as a boxing commissioner? Is it to ensure fair fights and protect the health of the athletes? Or is it to make money and just shuttle fighters in and out of the ring as quickly as possible?"

Obviously, a commissioner's role is *supposed to be* about protecting the fighters and the fans. But that's not how most of them approach their jobs, apparently. Even in Nevada, which has a commission that every brainless parrot of a writer or commentator refers to as "the strongest commission in the land," the goal is clearly to collect a few bucks whenever possible. Just look at what went on in Las Vegas in late-March and early-April, a stretch that shamed our sport the same way the Baggareeno once shamed Slim•Fast by gaining 27 pounds in a month. (The whole thing about complementing the shakes with a "sensible dinner" left way too much room for interpretation.)

PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Did boxing really need this farce?

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

You call this a fair fight?!?

Let's start with the lesser disgrace: On back-to-back Saturdays in early-April, Las Vegas gave us 45-year-old Bernard Hopkins vs. 41-year-old Roy Jones and 47-year-old Evander Holyfield vs. 41-year-old Frans Botha. These matchups were horrible for boxing's reputation with the mainstream and horrible for the fans who chose to watch them. But we'll give the Nevada State Athletic Commission a mere slap on the wrist because if the fighters passed their physicals, the commission had no firm grounds for preventing the fights. Just file it under "It makes your state look bad to host both of these geriatric jokes on consecutive weekends."

The big disgrace that has the Baggriculture up in arms came the Saturday prior to Hopkins-Jones, when Keith Kizer and company okey-doked the fight between Joan Guzman and Ali Funeka even after the Dominican doughboy weighed in a flabbergasting (emphasis on "flab") *nine* pounds above the lightweight limit. Yes, you read that right. The contract called for Guzman to weigh 135 pounds or less. He weighed 144. Looks like the Baggomatic isn't the only one who doesn't know what qualifies as a "sensible dinner."

When a fighter fails to make weight, the standard protocol is to ask if the opponent wants to go through with the fight, and if he says "Yes," fine the fighter who didn't make weight, give some of that money to the opponent who *did* make weight, and proceed with the fight. When a fighter misses by a pound or two, this all makes perfect sense. When a fighter misses by three or four pounds, it starts to get iffy. When a fighter misses by *nine* pounds—well, there's no precedent for that, but every reasonable human being knows what you're supposed to do: Cancel the fight.

You have one man who trained his butt off—in this case, a 6'1" dude who assuredly deprived himself of some valuable nutrition in order to trim down to 135. And you have one man who took whatever shortcuts he wanted—in this case, a 5'7" guy who was perfectly capable of making 122 a few years ago and comfortably checked in for this fight at 144 pounds. It's not a fair fight. It's like walking up to someone right after he finishes running a marathon and challenging him to race you. You're rested and ready to go. He just drained his body of everything it had.

Of course Funeka wanted to go through with the fight. He'd trained for weeks and didn't want to wave goodbye to the payday—a payday that was about to get increased by one-eighth of Guzman's purse as a penalty to the undisciplined party. But Funeka wanting to go through with the fight is like Joe Frazier wanting to come out for the 15th round in Manila. They're fighters. They don't want to back down. So it's up to other people to protect them. In this case, it's on Kizer and the Nevada Commission to say, "This is no longer

The Monthly Mailbagg

The implosion of the Manny Pacquiao-Floyd Mayweather fight is old news by now, but sometimes the email travels slowly. And sometimes you dullards go a whole month without anybody sending in a good email. So this is what you get:

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Manny can do no wrong

Just a quick thank you for giving Manny Pacquiao a fair hearing in the blood-testing story. Pacquiao has done more than most to help force boxing back into the mainstream media, but the magazines I read (THE RING, *Boxing Monthly*, *Boxing News*), all of which moan constantly about boxing losing prominence, have, on the whole, tended to side with Mayweather. Hypocrites. You're my boxing journalist of the year and I don't care if it's only March.

Philip Winters
Leeds, U.K.

Philip,

The Baggitty-Waggity isn't sure he agrees with your premise that most magazines sided with Mayweather in the great drug-testing debate. But who cares about anything you wrote in the first sentence of your email? All that matters is the final sentence. "Boxing journalist of the year" ... The Baggnificent One likes the sound of that. It's sort of like what the Nat Fleischer Award is supposed to be, if it wasn't determined by an old-boy network giving the award every year to whichever one of their friends hasn't gotten one yet.

Okay, back to Pacquiao. You raise an interesting point: Should anyone who makes a living in the boxing business be tearing down the superstar who is currently carrying the sport on his shoulders? The answer is yes, if that's how they feel. You can't treat someone with kid gloves (how corny is it when that phrase works its way into a boxing article?) because that someone is good for the game. If you feel Pacquiao is to blame for the Mayweather fight not happening in March, then you feel he's to blame and that's that.

Of course, Philip, you and the Baggoblaster both know Pacquiao's *not* to blame. Mayweather blew the fight by asking Pacquiao to do things he'd never asked any other opponent to do before. And in the end, Pacquiao didn't need the money, a factor everybody overlooked going in. The man has so many millions of dollars, he could feed a thousand Buboys for a thousand years. The fight didn't happen because Mayweather didn't particularly want it and Pacquiao didn't particularly need it.

At least that's how the boxing journalist of the year sees it.

a fight; it's now a farce. We're going to cancel the fight, fine Guzman, give that money to Funeka, and that's that." But Kizer and his gang of merry cash collectors didn't do that. Why not? Because they live for opportunities like this. Because nothing lines the commission's pockets quite like a fighter who fails to make weight.

You see, when they fined Guzman 25 percent of his purse, half of that went to Funeka, and the other half went to the commission. Now maybe they had honorable plans for the extra dough. Maybe it was going to be spread among several worthy charities. But then again, maybe it just goes into the holiday bonus fund. Or maybe the boys change those 100-dollar bills for singles and head out for a night at the Spearmint Rhino. (That's certainly what Baggwood Bumstead would do.)

Of course, the IBF, which was siphoning—err, sanctioning—the fight, made up some rules on the spot and said as long as Guzman didn't weigh over 150 pounds on the morning of the fight, the bout would go ahead. How very shocking that they wanted to proceed with the collection of their fees. And in this case, the Nevada Commission is no less guilty than the alphabet creeps. They wanted their money too. They didn't want to leave revenue on the table, even if it meant going through with a blatantly unfair fight.

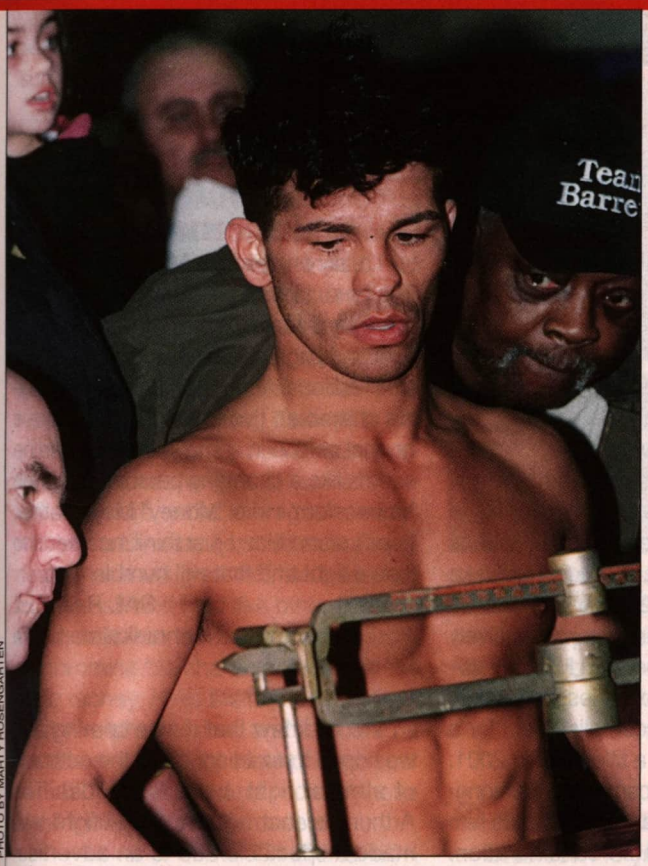


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Gatti's bogus weight-in

It's not as though Nevada is the only state where the commission has stopped taking weigh-ins seriously. Just look at what the New York State Athletic Commission was recently found guilty of doing in the 2000 fight between Arturo Gatti and Joey Gamache. It took 10 years for a verdict to come in (our legal system moves along with all the speed and efficiency of a Don King prospect's ascent), but it was finally determined in April that then-executive director of the NYSAC Tony Russo neglected at the weigh-in to actually weigh Gatti. Russo let him jump on and off the scale without determining his weight and went ahead and declared him to be at the contracted limit of 141 pounds. When Gamache's people objected, Russo cursed them out and told them to shut up and stop causing problems.

In other words, Russo turned a blind eye rather than do his job. He just wanted the fight to go forward, no complications, so when a complication arose, he ignored it. Kind of like Nevada brushing off the fact that Guzman missed weight by nine pounds.

In both cases, the commissions conspired to offer the public an unfair fight, which in the case of Gamache, ended a man's career and adversely affected his health. The Gamache atrocity should have cost the NYSAC money, which would have been a fair punishment for letting a hunger for money preside over fairness and integrity 10 years earlier. Instead, the commission was let off the hook. It was found guilty, but no damages were awarded. That makes about as much sense as hiring a call girl so you can play Scrabble with her all night.

Anyway, the next time someone tries to tell you Nevada and New York have the best commissions in the world, remind them of these incidents. If the Nevada and New York commissions really are better than all the others, then boxing is even more screwed than we thought.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

Leo Martinez, a Chicago-based journeyman who had a modest 14-12 (6) record when he came into the B.B. King Blues Club & Grill in New York City and played a few riffs on the face of previously undefeated Joelo Torres. B.B. famously told us "The Thrill Is Gone," but junior welterweight Martinez brought all sorts of thrills to an otherwise uneventful club show, spoiling Torres' 11-0-1 (7) record by laying him out for the count in the eighth and final round.

It wasn't the result anyone expected from Martinez, who has three separate losing streaks of three fights or more on his record. But that's what the Stingray is all about: underdogs who defy expectations. In this case, Martinez dominated an unbeaten prospect from the fourth round on and dished out a terrific beating. The "opponent" did the stingin', and like B.B., Torres was left singin' the blues. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

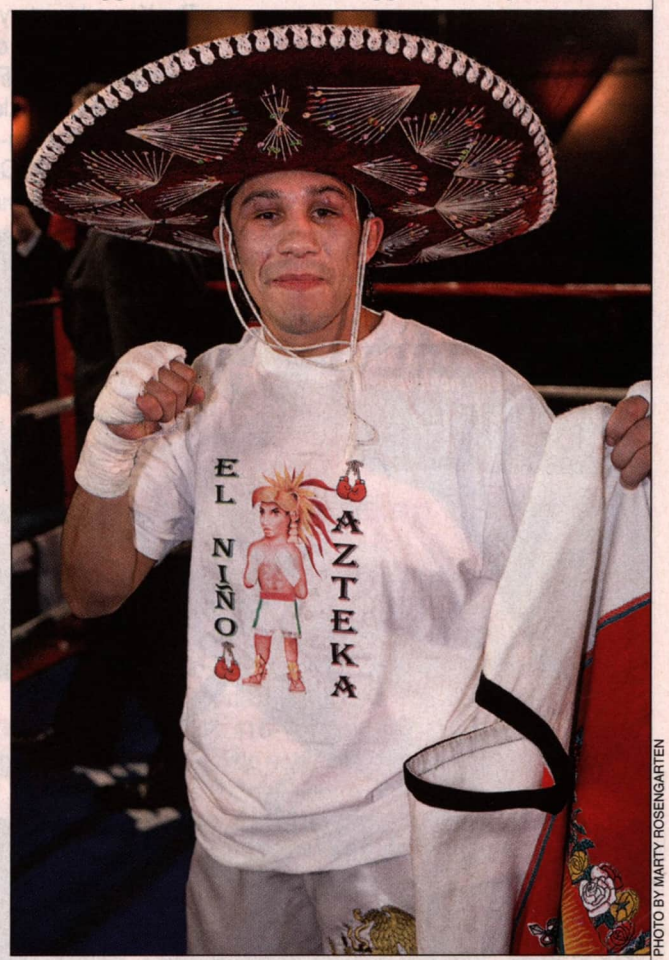


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Martinez' upset win was Stingray-worthy

[Come Out Writing]

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 114, Blue Bell, PA 19422.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Another Golden Oldie

I just finished watching Pongsaklek Wonjongkam win THE RING flyweight championship and regain the WBC 112-pound belt title by defeating Koki Kameda. I couldn't be more impressed. Pongsaklek has long been one of my favorite fighters to watch, but when he lost the title to Daisuke Naito in July 2007, he looked to be on the downside of an outstanding career. To come back nearly 2½ years later, at age 32, and take the younger, fresher, 23-year-old Kameda to school and beat him comprehensively was reminiscent of Bernard Hopkins giving Kelly Pavlik a boxing lesson back in '08. What a great accomplishment for a fighter who first won a title back in 2001. The Kameda victory cemented Wonjongkam's outstanding career and made him worthy of Hall of Fame consideration. Kudos to Pongsaklek Wonjongkam, the Thai legend!

MICHAEL WILSON JR.
Fort Mill, SC

Split Personality

I really enjoyed the May 2010 issue of THE RING. I loved the 30-page preview of the Floyd Mayweather-Shane Mosley fight and I agree with Nigel Collins' "Ringside" editorial about Mayweather's gangsta character. I've seen Floyd act like a normal person in some interviews and he seems like a charming person. But when he transforms into "Money" Mayweather, I can't stand him. I just think he needs to lose a fight and that will humble him.

SAL RANGEL
srangel@manniekalman.com

Logo Lunacy

We all knew that it was coming and we hoped it would not affect the outcome of a major fight, but it finally did. The Arthur Abraham-Andre Dirrell fight was made a spectacle due to an advertisement painted on the ring canvas. Come on promoters, aren't you making enough money with the sale of promotional gimmicks and sponsorship to go back to un-

Pongsaklek Wonjongkam bloodies Koki Kameda en route to winning THE RING flyweight championship. Reader Michael Wilson Jr. writes to praise the 32-year-old Wonjongkam's remarkable achievement.

PHOTO BY SANKEI/GETTY IMAGES

painted ring canvases if for no other reason than the safety of the fighters?

HANK VELOZ
Pacific Grove, CA

In-Depth Dawson

I just finished reading Joseph Santoliquito's interview with Chad Dawson in the May 2010 issue of THE RING and have to say it was really well done. It was great to get an in-depth insight into who Dawson is. Because he is so reserved and quiet, it's hard to get a read on him. I find Dawson's quiet confidence refreshing and believe he appeals more to the average American with his family-man persona and relaxed demeanor. I am glad that he doesn't try to be brash and loud like other fighters. Chad stays true to who he is and doesn't compromise his character just to make more money. He is the future of the light heavyweight division, and it would be great to see him fight some of the bigger names in the sport and receive those eight-figure paydays he deserves.

MATTHEW CHICK
matthew.b.chick@gmail.com

Winning Format

I think Showtime's "Super Six" is the best thing that has happened to boxing in the last 10 years or more. I think that these tournaments will attract a new fan base. Let's see more Super Six-style tournaments in other divisions.

STEVE KODIAK
stevenkodiak@yahoo.com

B-Hop And Roy

Roy Jones recent career decisions defy logic. Clearly, he is a shot fighter and yet continues to erode his legacy. If Roy was serious about his career, he'd have left it all in the ring when boxing Hopkins. Additionally, Hopkins needs to reconsider his heavyweight aspirations. Bernard just doesn't have the speed, power, or defensive ability to beat power-punching David Haye. Hopkins' inflated ego will explode if this match is made. Realistically, would anyone be interested in watching Hopkins trying to spoil and complain his way to an ugly decision. I think not. Jones and Hopkins should explore other options outside the squared circle. Their rematch was not fitting for two future Hall of Fame inductees.

MIKE HILLS
Cumbria, LA

PHOTO BY RAT KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Hopkins and Jones get tangled up during their infamous rematch. Reader Mike Hills felt that the bout was "unfitting" for two future Hall of Famers and thinks both men should retire.

Futile Mission

Evander Holyfield's knockout of Francois Botha was the worst possible outcome. The once-great Holyfield will now continue his quixotic quest to regain the heavyweight championship—until he runs into a windmill that can fight back. The false hope gained from the win over an also faded 41-year-old Botha might even set Vander on a collision course with David Haye or one of the Klitschkos, with painful consequences. Lennox Lewis was recently inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, which means he was retired for at least five years. Holyfield was past his prime when they fought 10 years ago, which puts in perspective the sheer insanity of Evander's quest.

BRAD MORRIS
Astoria NY

Pavlik Exposed

The Sergio Martinez fight turned out to be Kelly Pavlik's Waterloo. He was outgunned, outboxed, and couldn't keep up with Martinez' speed. Now we realize that Kelly's wins over Edison Miranda and Jermain Taylor were against fighters whose chins were overrated. So where does this leave Pavlik? Even though he has a return-fight clause with Martinez, I'm afraid he has seen his last days as a champion.

JOE THOMPSON
Charlotte, NC

Baggnificent!

Jim Bagg's column in the April 2010 issue of THE RING, "A Quack In The Facade," was quite possibly the most insightful and well-written piece of work that I have ever read about Floyd Mayweather in the magazine. The article was humorous and dead-on accurate. Bagg put into words what the majority of boxing fans feel about Mayweather. Congratulations on a job well done, Jim.

FRED SIMMONS
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Something's Rotten In Rama

I am writing to express my sorrow with the judging of the Steve Molitor-Takalani Ndlovu fight at Casino Rama. It ruined an otherwise entertaining and technical fight. The scores of 115-113, 116-112, and 117-111 in Molitor's favor do not reflect the reality of the bout. The fight was at the very least a draw. Should anyone choose to review the tapes, I am the guy repeatedly yelling "Bulls___" right after the decision was announced.

MARCO ARCARO
Barrie, Ontario ■

[Looking Ahead]

By William Dettloff

Green Crashes "Super Six" Party

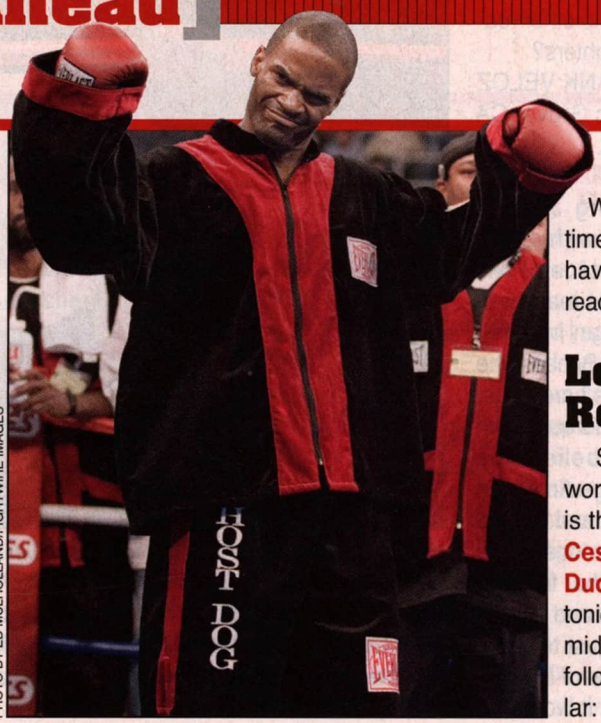


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Green is ready for Ward

You had to think that sooner or later a super middleweight as talented as **Allan Green** would one way or another find himself in Showtime's "Super Six" super middleweight tournament. And wouldn't you know, when **Arthur Abraham** anesthetized the increasingly narcoleptic **Jermain Taylor**, after which Taylor either voluntarily withdrew from the tourney or was enticed to, opportunity knocked on Green's door. He let it in. He gets his first chance to show he belonged all along when he meets **Andre Ward**, 21-0 (13) on June 19th in Ward's hometown of Oakland, California.

The bout was originally scheduled to take place on the April 24th telecast that featured **Mikkel Kessler** against **Carl Froch**. However, Ward suffered an injury to his troublesome right knee while training that necessitated a postponement. This led to a burst of paranoia even more robust than usual from Green's promoter, **Lou DiBella**, who said he suspected Ward's promoter, Dan Goossen, of trying to pull his fighter out of the tournament. The new date pleased everyone.

"He was very happy when we got the new date," DiBella told ESPN. "This guy has been training basically since December. First he thought he was fighting **Sakio Bika** in January and then he thought he was fighting Ward in April. He's been training his ass off for a long time and itching to get back in the ring."

Green, 29-1 (20), THE RING's eighth-ranked contender, is coming off a lackluster distance win over slippery **Tarvis Simms** in October, while Ward, who THE RING ranks second at 168 pounds, is still riding high off his technical decision win over tourney co-favorite Kessler in November. That Green will meet Ward in Ward's own backyard seems certain to be a disadvantage, but Green seems not to mind.

"I'm actually glad the fight is in Oakland," Green said. "It didn't have to be, you know. But a ring is a ring, and no matter what the city, it isn't going to change the outcome. So I don't mind going there and fighting him in his backyard. I will rise to the occasion."

As **Andre Dirrell** demonstrated in his shocking win over tournament co-favorite Abraham in March, things take interesting turns in this tournament, so your guess is as good as ours as to what wins out here—Ward's speed or Green's power. So far, speed appears to have an advantage, but Green has fight-ending power in either fist. We should hope that by the time you read this both fighters have remained injury free and ready to go.

Loser Must Retire?

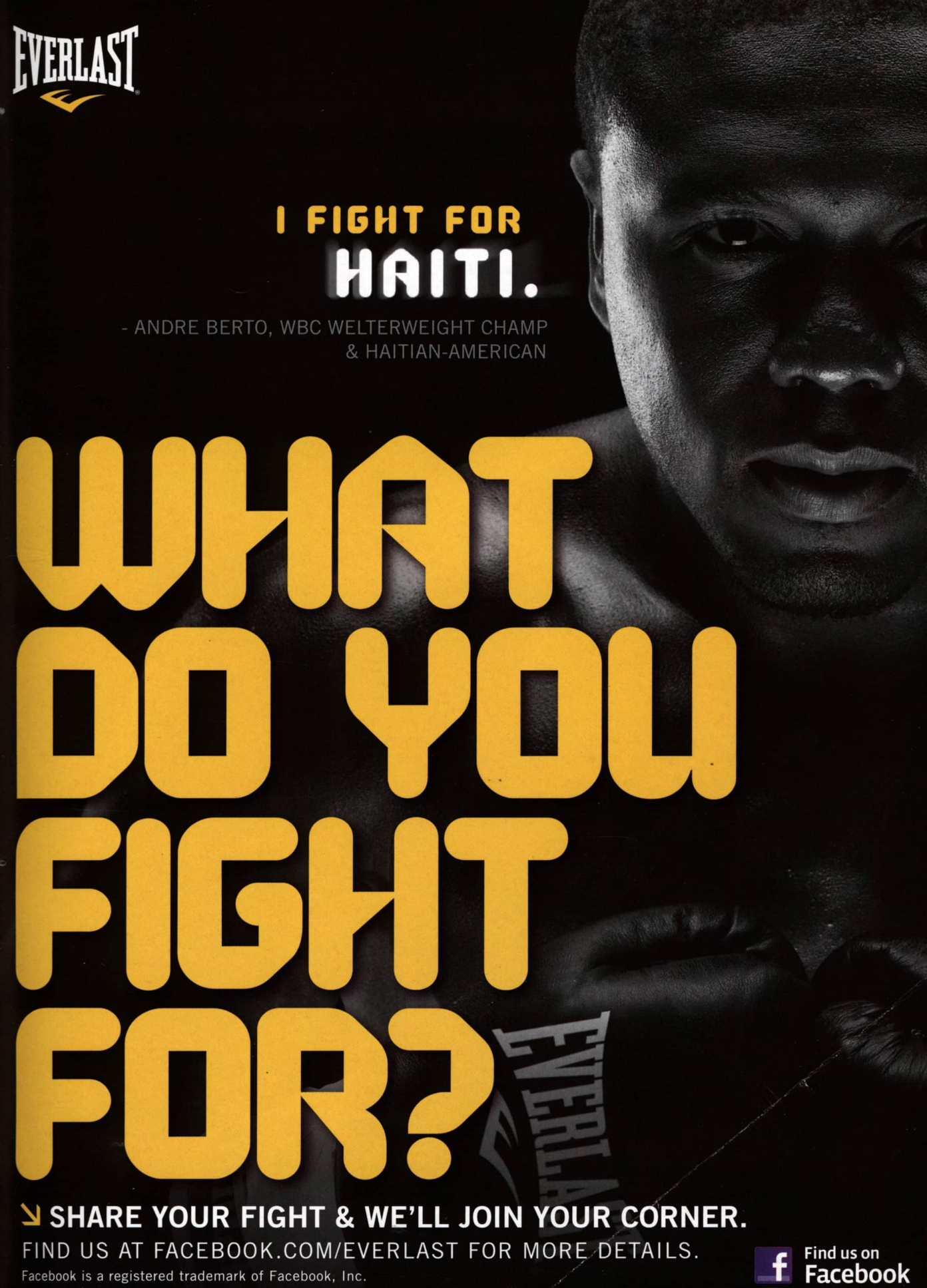
Somewhat less intriguing but worthy of mention nonetheless is the matchup between **Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.** and **John Duddy** on June 24 in San Antonio, Texas. A pair of unranked middleweights with disparate followings, they are wildly popular: Chavez Jr. with Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, Duddy with Irish-Americans.

Such is his star power that without ever having won a title or even having faced a top-10 contender, Chavez, 41-0-1 (30) has been headlining his own Top Rank-promoted pay-per-view shows for several years and making boatloads of money. He was last seen lumbering to a 10-round decision win over journeyman **Troy Rowland**, after which he was suspended for seven months when post fight tests revealed he had taken a diuretic.

Duddy, 29-1 (18), was once seen, unlike Chavez Jr., as having real potential. That view has been proved to be more or less illusory, as he has struggled against even the most ordinary journeymen. On the **Manny Pacquiao-Josh Clottey** show in March, he labored to a split decision win over once-defeated but entirely untested 23-2 (18) **Michael Medina**. It would be conventional—and untrue—to say that he slugs too much and would do better boxing more; he is especially good at neither. Nevertheless, Duddy, Chavez, and Top Rank will make out quite well with the pay-per-view revenue for a bout that represents an obvious and entirely forgivable desire, especially in Duddy's case, to "cash out."

Listen Up

Bob Arum finally made good on his promise to bring boxing back to Yankee Stadium, putting the June 5 HBO-televised **Miguel Cotto-Yuri Foreman** fight in Yankee Stadium ... A week after Cotto and Foreman meet, junior flyweight world champion **Ivan Calderon**, 33-0 (6), will defend against Mexico's unrated **Jesus Iribe**, 16-6-5 (10) at Madison Square Garden. It will be Calderon's sixth title defense. Fox Sports en Espanol/Fox Sports Net will televise. ■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